



INTERPOL

# WOMEN IN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE MENA REGION



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## ***Acknowledgements***

We would like to thank all the national police agencies, and in particular the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, for their support throughout the past months in the preparation of this publication. We would also like to thank the members of the Editorial Board for their responsiveness and contributions. Without their active participation throughout the process, we would not have been able to draft this regional overview. Finally, we would like to thank the many officers with whom we engaged throughout the process for their willingness to meet with us and to exchange, to the peer reviewers for their valuable contributions, and to the sponsor, the European Union, for making this output possible.

## ***Project MOMENTUM MENA***

This report has been made possible by the generous financial support of the European Union. Its publication is one of the outputs of Project MOMENTUM MENA, a three-year capacity-building initiative to develop and reinforce national and regional law enforcement capacities to combat organized crime by strengthening gender mainstreaming in law enforcement agencies. Specifically, Project MOMENTUM develops and implements tailored training programmes and conducts research and analysis. The project also provides training and capacity-building opportunities for female officers actively working or interested in working in areas related to the fight against transnational organized crime. By promoting the meaningful participation of women in the fight against transnational organized crime, Project MOMENTUM contributes to the development of more effective, responsive, and accountable policing services that better serve the needs of communities across the region.

## ***THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION -INTERPOL***

hereinafter referred to as INTERPOL, is the world's largest international police organization. Its role is to connect law enforcement agencies across its 196 member countries and assist them in combating transnational crime to create a safer world. To this end, INTERPOL enables them to share and access data on crimes and criminals, and provides a range of technical and operational support, as well as capacity building and training.

# Acronyms

|                    |                                                                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CEDAW</b>       | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| <b>CRSV</b>        | Conflict-Related Sexual Violence                                           |
| <b>DGSN</b>        | Directorate General for National Security (Morocco and Algeria)            |
| <b>EUPOL COPPS</b> | European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support          |
| <b>GBV</b>         | Gender Based Violence                                                      |
| <b>GSA</b>         | Gender Self-Assessment                                                     |
| <b>ISF</b>         | Internal Security Forces (Lebanon)                                         |
| <b>JONAP</b>       | Jordanian National Action Plan                                             |
| <b>MENA</b>        | Middle East and North Africa                                               |
| <b>MINUSMA</b>     | United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali   |
| <b>MoF</b>         | Ministry of Finance                                                        |
| <b>NAP</b>         | National Action Plan                                                       |
| <b>PCP</b>         | Palestinian Civilian Police                                                |
| <b>PSD</b>         | Public Security Directorate (Jordan)                                       |
| <b>SDG</b>         | Sustainable Development Goals                                              |
| <b>TNA</b>         | Training Needs Analysis                                                    |
| <b>UNSCR</b>       | United Nations Security Council Resolution                                 |
| <b>WPS</b>         | Women, Peace, and Security                                                 |

# Foreword

The growing role of women in law enforcement is reshaping policing and strengthening security institutions across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and beyond.

This regional overview, developed under INTERPOL's Project MOMENTUM MENA and funded by the European Union, provides a high-level perspective on efforts to advance women's participation in law enforcement across seven countries in the region.

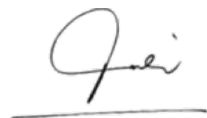
Legal and policy reforms, together with recruitment, training and leadership initiatives are driving steady change, reflected in the growing number of women officers in operational and leadership roles.

Capacity building and training are at the heart of this transformation, equipping officers with the skills, knowledge and networks required to operate effectively in increasingly diverse and evolving contexts.

The experiences and perspectives of women officers highlighted in this report illustrate both the progress achieved and the work that still lies ahead. Sustaining the momentum requires long term institutional commitment, continuous training grounded in human rights and gender equality frameworks, and professional networks that enable women to grow and lead within and beyond their agencies.

At its core, this report bears witness to the voices, experiences and contributions of the women who serve. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Project MOMENTUM Editorial Board and to all officers and institutions who generously shared their expertise and time.

We invite policymakers, law enforcement leaders and international partners to use this report as a baseline and a roadmap for action. Strengthening the role of women in policing is a strategic and operational necessity for building inclusive, resilient and effective institutions to better serve communities. The decisions made today will shape the future of policing for generations to come.



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INTERPOL



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# Introduction

Police officers hold a unique position of trust and authority in society. They have the power to exercise the use of legitimate force through their everyday practices and interactions with the public. This authority is accompanied by the weight of the responsibility to uphold the law, protect citizens, and maintain social order. It is therefore essential to recognize the importance of building a fair, inclusive, and equitable institution, ensuring all members of society feel their security needs are understood and that they are protected. Women officers may be uniquely positioned to contribute to this endeavour. It is well documented that a more gender diverse police workforce increases police legitimacy and public confidence in policing. Research also suggests women police officers build better community relations, use less force, receive fewer complaints against them, and carry out fewer discretionary arrests<sup>1</sup>.

However, increasing women's participation in law enforcement is more than a matter of equity or of doing the right thing, it is also an operational imperative. Women's participation in law enforcement has been linked to improved

services, outcomes, and experiences for victims and survivors of crime in general and of crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence in particular, and to higher reporting rates of these crimes<sup>2</sup>.

Research on women's participation in law enforcement has largely focused on Europe and North America, leaving a significant knowledge gap regarding the developments in other regions. This regional overview addresses this gap by publishing unique data sets and insights from interviews with law enforcement officers in agencies that have received less visibility. At the heart of these efforts is a commitment to amplifying the voices and perspectives of women police officers, acknowledging their presence, and recognizing their contributions to security. By doing so, we hope to contribute to showing the diversity of the efforts being made to advance the meaningful participation of women in law enforcement and crime fighting, to provide a platform for experience sharing, and to continue to inspire positive developments in law enforcement agencies in the region and beyond.

## Research summary

The goal of this research was to answer the question: **What progress has been made in recent decades to enhance women's participation in law enforcement?** Specifically, as the first study of its kind to examine women's participation in law enforcement in the MENA region, it sheds light on the trends of the last few decades and provides examples of some of the promising practices that have proved to have an impact or the potential to drive institutional change.

This regional overview is organized in three chapters. The introduction provides an overview of the study's rationale, methodology, participant sample, and limitations. **Chapter one** outlines international, regional, and country-level institutional policies, strategies, and action

plans on gender equality. It also shows how law enforcement agencies have sought to translate these legal and policy frameworks into institutional strategies and action plans. **Chapter two** presents historical and statistical information on women's participation in law enforcement, including country-specific data and trends. **Chapter three** explores the recruitment, deployment, and promotion of women in law enforcement, highlighting promising practices such as targeted recruitment strategies, peacekeeping mission deployments, and professional networking programmes. **The conclusion** provides recommendations for international (police) organizations and development partners on how to continue supporting the progress already made and encourage future developments.

## Methodology

The regional overview was developed in partnership with the Editorial Board of Project MOMENTUM. The Board is comprised of six high-ranking female officers representing six of the law enforcement agencies in the region. They contributed their experience and expertise to help develop this material, as well as sharing information and reviewing the publication.

This research is qualitative in nature and includes quotes from participating officers in order to share their voices and perspectives directly. While many participants may have shared the same views, the aim is not to establish generalizable findings given that women police officers are a diverse population group. Furthermore, the pool of officers that contributed come mostly from capital

**In addition to the substantial contributions of the Editorial Board members, the methodology included:**

- A desk review of national legislation, the key publications available in the public domain, and academic research.
- On-site visits to all partner countries, which enabled first-hand observation of training programmes for female officers and exchanges with female law enforcement officers.
- Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions organized throughout 2023 and 2024 allowed the team to reach out to over eighty female officers. The officers ranged from junior ranks to senior officers and were deployed in a variety of policing areas, including criminal investigation, forensics, close protection, administration, public relations, and INTERPOL National Central Bureaus.

cities. Quotes attributable to the Editorial Board members have been approved by officers and their respective agencies. To protect the participants' identities, all other quotes and references in the report are attributed by country, without revealing any personal details.

For the purposes of this research, law enforcement (institutions) refers to the agencies which are members of INTERPOL. These include:



Directorate General of National Security / Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale (DGSN), People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.



Directorate General of National Security / Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale (DGSN), Kingdom of Morocco.



Public Security Sector, Arab Republic of Egypt.



Palestinian Civilian Police, State of Palestine.



Directorate of Public Security, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.



Directorate General of Public Security / Direction Générale de la Sûreté Publique, Republic of Tunisia.



Directorate General of Internal Security Forces / Direction Générale des Forces de Sécurité Intérieure, Republic of Lebanon<sup>3</sup>.

## Methodological limitations

The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution due to its methodological limitations. The most difficult aspect when working with any security institution is access to information, whether it is via access to documents or contact with the officers themselves. Through the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, and thanks to the active participation of the Editorial Board members, we were able to overcome this challenge to some extent and obtain primary information which is not available in the public domain.

Furthermore, due to the nature of their work and the demands of policing, officers can be a difficult population to engage with. This presented challenges in carrying out a critical examination of the specific challenges faced by female officers.

While the study benefited from direct contact with over eighty female officers from the region, this sample size is small compared to the overall population. Moreover, most officers with whom we engaged were based in the capital city or large urban centres, which may not be representative of the broader population, especially those working in smaller police stations in rural or border areas. These considerations potentially further limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized.

Finally, throughout the study we have tried to highlight a variety of promising practices and initiatives from different agencies. Due to time and resource constraints, as well as limitations in terms of access to information, it was not possible to research further and potentially include all other initiatives and work conducted by the agencies to advance women's participation in law enforcement. The information presented here should be taken as illustrative examples rather than an exhaustive list of all efforts currently underway. We acknowledge that there may be other notable legislation, policies, and national- or agency-level initiatives and successes that are not recorded in this research, and we encourage agencies to continue sharing their experiences and best practices to support the advancement of women in law enforcement.

The report was reviewed by all law enforcement agencies mentioned in this regional overview, as well as by a group of independent subject matter experts. Their feedback helped ensure the accuracy and relevance of the findings. We sincerely thank all contributors for their time, insights, and constructive feedback.

# Key findings

Across the region, governments are moving towards integrating international gender equality frameworks into national laws and strategies, alongside efforts to institutionalize gender mainstreaming within public institutions.



- **All 7 countries have ratified CEDAW**, and Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia have adopted UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans.
- Various countries have **established or strengthened national gender institutions**, such as Algeria's Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs, Morocco's National Commission for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and Tunisia's Council of Peers for Equality and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.
- Several countries have **adopted national strategies on gender equality and women's empowerment**, including Egypt's National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women 2030, Lebanon's National Strategy

for Women 2022–2030, as well as its first Action Plan, and Morocco's Governmental Plan for Equality 2023–2026.

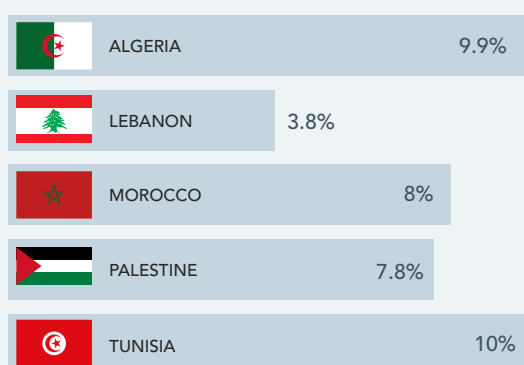
- **Gender mainstreaming has expanded into security and law enforcement**, with dedicated strategies and units such as Jordan's PSD Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, Palestine's Police Gender Strategy, Egypt's Gender and Human Rights Sector, and Tunisia's Ministry of Interior sectoral plan.

However, despite this progress, none of the seven economies ranks in the top 100 of the Global Gender Gap Index, a clear reminder that achieving women's empowerment and working towards equality requires sustained, long-term investments in order to end the disparities that persist.



**The number of women police officers has grown steadily, in particular over the past two decades:**

- Women police were recruited as early as the 1970s, and testimonies from female officers reflect gradual shifts in institutional culture and their increased acceptance into the profession.
- The recruitment of women police has become a measurable benchmark of progress, with many agencies setting numerical targets through strategies or action plans.
- **Today women police account for a small but growing percentage of the total personnel in the agencies in the region between 4% to 10 %.**



- Regulatory changes and targeted communication campaigns can shift recruitment outcomes significantly, as showcased by Morocco's initiatives.

**While large numbers of women remain in lower ranks and administrative functions, their deployment to operational and investigative roles has increased.**

- The establishment of community policing initiatives, gender-based violence units, and female special forces teams have been key accelerators for women entering operational and specialized policing roles.



*The UN target of 30% women by 2030 has created concrete incentives for national police services to expand deployment pipelines, and has encouraged countries to prepare, train, and nominate more female officers for international service, with Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan increasing the number of women participating in UN police missions in recent years.*

- Barriers for deployment to non-traditional roles include not only family responsibilities, cultural expectations, and stereotypes, but also women's own hesitancy toward operational work due to perceived risks or social norms.



## **REPRESENTATION IS STILL LIMITED IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS BUT IS PROGRESSING AS MORE WOMEN REACH COMMAND POSITIONS.**

- Women are still underrepresented in leadership, which limits their influence on institutional policies. Those who do reach senior ranks are still largely concentrated in administrative rather than operational command positions.
- Law enforcement agencies are adopting specific initiatives and carrying out institutional reforms to tackle the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. For example, recent reforms and strategies in Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia show that when promotion systems and leadership pipelines are built intentionally, women's advancement in law enforcement becomes achievable.
- Aside from formal measures, informal professional networks, mentorship, sponsorship, and peer support are crucial for women's career growth.

Access to technical and leadership training is an important element in women's eligibility for promotion and deployment opportunities.

- **Unequal access to technical and leadership training further restricts women's eligibility for promotion**, underscoring the need for equal participation in specialized and leadership courses.
- **Various countries are addressing these barriers through dedicated facilities** (Jordan), online and roving training (Algeria, Jordan), and quotas to ensure women's participation (Tunisia).
- **Quotas and gender targets have proven to be effective short-term tools for boosting women's participation and visibility**, but they must be applied carefully in order to maintain credibility; many women police advocate for setting clear minimum thresholds, not only for recruitment and promotion but also for training, especially for international opportunities where women are often overlooked.
- **Gender-responsive training improves case handling, empathy, and community trust**, while institutional gender and human rights training contributes to developing more inclusive and accountable policing cultures. If the impact is to last, such training must be mandatory, recurrent, and fully embedded within police curricula and professional development systems, rather than delivered as ad hoc or externally driven initiatives.



## *Selected recommendations*

- **Continue working towards ensuring national and institutional policies** comply with the broader international policy and treaty frameworks on human rights and women's empowerment.
- **National laws, regulations, and internal police policies should be reviewed** and amended as needed in order to explicitly support the recruitment, deployment, and career advancement of women in policing and remove any structural barriers.
- **Translate gender strategies into action** through clear processes, resources, and regular reporting.
- **Continue strengthening outreach programmes** and adjust recruitment criteria to increase women's representation in law enforcement.
- **Ensure women police officers are not confined to specific departments or limited roles**, and adopt a comprehensive integration approach that enables women to participate across all operational, investigative, administrative, and leadership functions without discrimination. This also means ensuring that all necessary operational, logistical, and safety requirements are in place to support their participation.
- **Provide specialized technical training** and consider participation targets to ensure equal access to learning opportunities.
- **Expand modular, online, and roving training** to increase women officers' participation.
- **Increase efforts to deploy women in specialized and high-prestige units**, which will in turn build a pipeline for future leaders.
- **Ensure women are represented on promotion panels** and create leadership and mentoring pipelines.
- **Maintain visibility through regular reporting**, publications, and initiatives tracking the progress of women in law enforcement.



# International, regional, and national legal and policy frameworks

## International frameworks

International legal and policy frameworks provide a robust foundation for mainstreaming gender across all areas of life, from economic and social domains to defence and security. These frameworks are essential for providing global guidance and standards which in turn should serve as a basis for placing legal and policy measures aimed at advancing gender equality into a regional and national context.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, is the only legally binding international human rights instrument that specifically addresses women's rights. It defines the concept of equality and puts the onus on governments to take measures to guarantee the enjoyment of equal rights. 189 of the UN's 194 member countries have become state parties to CEDAW, including all countries covered by this regional overview (see table 2). The Convention also calls for regular reporting from member countries and has been complemented by an Optional Protocol, adopted in 2000 (the Protocol). The Protocol aims to strengthen accountability for the implementation of the convention and enables individuals and groups to bring their complaints against governments to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In addition to CEDAW, the UN Security Council has adopted ten resolutions since 2000, collectively known as the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) policy architecture. The resolutions cover four key areas: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery, and at its core it aims to address the disproportionate impact of violent conflict and war on women and girls, and to advance the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The WPS agenda has led to an international push to

advance its implementation at a national level through the adoption of National Action Plans on WPS. It has also led to concerted efforts by the United Nations to encourage member states to deploy more women on peacekeeping missions. These efforts have translated into an increase in the number of women being deployed, in civilian, military, and police roles.

Gender equality is also included as a standalone goal in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through SDG 5: gender equality and empowering women and girls. Gender equality and women's empowerment are also considered as integral to each of the seventeen goals. It is only by guaranteeing the rights of women and girls that governments can achieve justice, inclusion, and economies that work for all. UN member countries are invited to report regularly on the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs through Voluntary National Reviews. Finally, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC COP) adopted, in 2002 and 2017 respectively, Resolution 11/2 and Resolution 26/3. These Resolutions call on states to mainstream gender and human rights into their legislation, policies, programmes, and other initiatives against organized crime and to encourage the participation of women across their criminal justice systems.

| UNTOC COP Resolution 11/2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | UNTOC COP Resolution 26/3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| States are called to....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream gender and human rights into laws and policies on organized crime.</li> <li>• Analyze and adapt policies to address inequalities and systemic factors.</li> <li>• Promote women's participation in the justice system and train for gender-sensitive responses.</li> <li>• Gather and use gender-disaggregated data in research on organized crime.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime with a gender perspective.</li> <li>• Develop laws and policies that address the needs of women and girls.</li> <li>• Promote women's participation in criminal justice institutions.</li> <li>• Use a victim-centred approach to combat transnational organized crime.</li> <li>• Prevent violence against women and girls and protect victims.</li> <li>• Mainstream a gender perspective in research on transnational organized crime.</li> </ul> |

| Country                                                                                                                | CEDAW<br>Signature date    | CEDAW<br>Ratification Date | Reservations<br>to CEDAW                                                                                                                        | National action<br>plan on WPS     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Algeria</b><br>                    | 22 May 1996                | 22 May 1996                | Art 2; Art 15(4) <sup>4</sup> ; Art 16;<br>Art 9(2) <sup>5</sup>                                                                                | No                                 |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Egypt</b><br>                      | 16 July 1980               | 18 September 1981          | Article 2; Article 16;<br>Article 29(1) <sup>6</sup>                                                                                            | No                                 |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>The National Council for Women (NCW)                         |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Jordan</b><br>                     | 3 December 1980            | 1 July 1996                | Art. 9(2) <sup>7</sup> ; Art. 15(4);<br>Art. 16(1)(c) <sup>8</sup> ; Art. 16(1)<br>(d) <sup>9</sup> ; Art 16(1)(g) <sup>10</sup>                | Yes                                |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) <sup>11</sup> |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Lebanon</b><br>                  | 21 April 1997              | 16 July 1997               | Art. 9(2); Art. 16 <sup>12</sup> ; Art.<br>29(1) <sup>13</sup>                                                                                  | Yes                                |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) <sup>14</sup>  |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Morocco</b><br>                  | 21 June 1993               | 21 June 1993               | Art 2 <sup>15</sup> ; Art 29(1)                                                                                                                 | Yes (not<br>available<br>publicly) |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family       |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Palestine</b><br>                | 2 April 2014 <sup>16</sup> | 2 April 2024               | None                                                                                                                                            | Yes                                |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)                           |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |
| <b>Tunisia</b><br>                  | 24 July 1980               | 20 September 1985          | All reservations were<br>lifted in 2011 and<br>subsequently formally<br>registered in 2014 by<br>notification from the<br>government to the UN. | Yes                                |
| <b>National agency responsible for gender equality</b><br>Ministry of Women, Family, and Children in Tunisia           |                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                    |

## Regional frameworks

At a regional level, the League of Arab States, also known as the Arab League, the oldest regional body, is an alliance of 22 Arab countries which aims to increase cooperation in areas such as economic and military affairs<sup>17</sup>. Although it does not specifically address women's rights, the first Arab Charter of Human Rights, adopted in 2004, includes several provisions affirming the rights of women, promoting gender equality, and eliminating discrimination against women. The Charter covers women's rights in marriage, family relations, and violence against women, as well as women's participation in political and public life and their nationality rights.

Ten years later, in February 2014, the Arab League adopted the Cairo Declaration for Arab Women – Post-2015 Development Agenda Opportunities and Challenges. The declaration was subsequently approved as a UN document during the 2014 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, and was intended to provide a framework for the development and empowerment of Arab women. It underscored the consensus and solidarity within the Arab region regarding the need for a comprehensive stand-alone goal for women's empowerment and gender equality to be included in the post 2015-development agenda. It emphasizes women's role in sustainable development, peacebuilding, and economic empowerment. The declaration calls for legal reforms to ensure gender equality, protect women from violence, and improve access to education and healthcare. It also underscores the importance of partnerships between governments, civil society, and international organizations in achieving these goals. The aim of the declaration was to work towards ensuring that the Arab states are empowered to achieve and guarantee all women's

rights at all levels and during all stages of life by the start of 2030.

In October 2015, the organization adopted the Executive Regional Action Plan "Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security" 2015-2030<sup>18</sup>, under Resolution 7966 O.S. The plan is structured according to the four pillars of the UNSCR 1325, and its objective is to provide a roadmap to ensure women and girls in the Arab region are safeguarded from conflicts, occupation, wars, and terrorism, and are fully protected under legislations and policies that promote their participation in building lasting peace and promoting stability. The action plan also includes a special section on terrorism that focuses on the development of national frameworks to combat terrorist activities. The plan references women's roles in law enforcement as part of its broader objectives to ensure women's participation in security sectors. It encourages the improvement of women's representation in peacekeeping and more generally in law enforcement and security institutions in order to effectively address gender-based violence and incorporate gender-sensitive practices into peace and security operations.

Both the Arab League Executive Regional Action Plan and the Cairo Declaration strive to create a robust framework for women's empowerment and protection in the Arab region. By aligning with global standards and addressing specific regional challenges, these initiatives aim to ensure comprehensive rights for Arab women and their participation in all spheres of life by 2030. Since the adoption of these frameworks, and although monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been foreseen, no further information is available on how their implementation is progressing.

## 1.1 National legislation, strategies, and action plans

International treaties and conventions provide a foundation for national laws and policies, ensuring global commitments are met at a national level. National legislation, policies, and strategies are crucial for translating these international frameworks into progress in local contexts and adapting international principles to meet specific cultural, social, and political contexts<sup>19</sup>.



In recent years, and in particular since 2011, the Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed a surge in efforts to promote gender equality, with many countries introducing legislative and institutional reforms aimed at addressing disparities<sup>20</sup>. For instance, in **Algeria**, amendments to national laws and legislative mechanisms have criminalised violence against women in its various forms (Penal Code amendments from 2015 and 2024) and have led to an increase in women's representation in elected bodies via an electoral quota system (2012 Organic Law). In 2002, Algeria established its first government body dedicated to women's affairs under the name Delegated Ministry in charge of the Family and Women's Affairs, which was later renamed the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs and is responsible for implementing policies to promote the status of women. In 2006, the Ministry developed the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, the first national framework aimed at advancing women's status in Algeria.



In **Egypt**, the 2014 Constitution included provisions enshrining the state's responsibility to protect women from all forms of violence and to empower them (*art.11*). This was followed by the creation of a dedicated department within the Ministry of Interior to address violence against women and to ensure that legal support and psychological and community support services are available to victims<sup>21</sup>, as well as the establishment of dedicated sections in all security directorates to work to combat violence against women<sup>22</sup>. In 2017, the

government endorsed the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women 2030, which covers political, economic, and social empowerment and established the Egypt National Observatory for Women (ENOW) to track the strategy's progress. In 2018, the government established the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR), and in 2021 adopted its first National Human Rights Strategy<sup>23</sup> which includes a pillar on the rights of women<sup>24</sup>. Egypt's Vision 2030 also includes a focus on gender equality as part of its broader sustainable development agenda<sup>25</sup>.



**Lebanon**, despite facing significant economic and political crises, established the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs in 2016, which in 2019 became the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth. Another national body mandated with promoting gender equality is the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), established in 1998 and affiliated with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In 2019, the country made history with the appointment of Raya Al Hassan as the first woman in the Arab world to head the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities<sup>26</sup>. On the legislative front, Law No. 293 on the "Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence" was passed in 2014 and amended in 2020; and Law No. 205 was passed to "Criminalize Sexual Harassment and Rehabilitate Victims" (2020). In 2023, Lebanon launched its National Strategy for Women (2022–2030) and its first Action Plan (2024–2026).



**Jordan** is among the top five economies in terms of enacting reforms to advance women's rights, according to the 2024 Women, Business and the Law Report from the World Bank<sup>27</sup>. This reconfirms the trend seen over the past ten years, during which **Jordan** has developed a plethora of national policies and strategies on gender equality. These efforts include the development of the Jordanian National Action Plan on Women,

Peace, and Security (JONAP) 2022–2025, the National Strategy for Women 2020–2025, a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Public Security Directorate in Jordan (referred to herein as the Strategy), and the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights 2016–2025. These commitments are intended to demonstrate Jordan’s national policy response to internationally agreed policies, norms, and standards for gender equality and human rights.



In **Morocco**, in accordance with conventions and international covenants ratified by the country, the 2011 Constitution established the principle of equality between men and women and the equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. Subsequently, the government adopted a host of measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination – including the 2017–2021 Government Plan for Equality (ICRAM II) - established the National Commission for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2022)<sup>28</sup>, and adopted the national administrative reform plan for the period 2018–2021, which includes a strategy for institutionalizing gender equality in public services<sup>29</sup>. Morocco is also at its third Governmental Plan for Equality 2023–2026.



The Palestinian Basic Law guarantees equality and participation for women, and **Palestine** ratified CEDAW in 2014 (without reservations) and joined its Optional Protocol in 2019. However, national legislation has yet to be fully aligned with the convention, and a comprehensive law on domestic violence, including the long-pending Family Protection Bill, remains unadopted. Recently, the President established an Advisory Council for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to guide policy and legislative reform toward gender equality. In parallel, under the leadership of the National Committee for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, Palestine adopted its 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan 2020–2024 to advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.



In **Tunisia**, Governmental Order 626 of 2016 established a Council of Peers for Equality and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (the Council). In 2018, the Council approved the National Plan for the Inclusion and

Institutionalization of Gender. The plan aims to guide government policies by setting priorities to eliminate gender gaps and uphold equality and equal opportunity in all areas.

To ensure the plan is properly implemented, metrics and indicators are to be used to evaluate progress, including:

- An accountability system for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women in legislation and practices.
- Increasing women’s representation and active participation in elected bodies and decision-making positions at national, regional, and local levels.
- Policies that ensure economic and financial empowerment for women.
- Public policies, development plans, and budgets that adopt a gender-based approach. A national communication plan on the ground for gender mainstreaming
- A national strategy for gender mainstreaming.

Overall, according to the 2024 World Economic Forum Gender Equality Index, **Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia** ranked among the top countries in the region in terms of political empowerment. **Algeria** is one of the economies with the greatest increase in its gender parity score.

While national frameworks and initiatives provide a strong foundation, significant efforts are needed to address historically acute gender disparities. For example, despite the positive trend and numerous reforms in recent years, the Middle East and North Africa region continues to have the largest legal gap in terms of women’s rights<sup>30</sup> and ranks last globally in terms of gender parity. None of the countries included in this regional overview are in the top 100 economies in the 2024 Gender Equality Index<sup>31</sup>. This is a reminder that achieving women’s empowerment and working towards equality requires sustained, long-term investments.

## The Evolution of the Global Gender Gap Index Ranking

|                                            |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                        |                                                                                         |                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2006</b><br>ranked out of 115 countries |  109 |  107 |  97  |  93  |  90  |                                                                                         |
| <b>2010</b><br>ranked out of 134 countries |  127 |  125 |  120 |  119 |  116 |  107 |
| <b>2015</b><br>ranked out of 145 countries |  140 |  139 |  138 |  136 |  128 |  127 |
| <b>2020</b><br>ranked out of 153 countries |  145 |  143 |  138 |  134 |  132 |  124 |
| <b>2024</b><br>ranked out of 146 countries |  139 |  137 |  135 |  133 |  123 |  115 |

 unranked

World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Report 2024



## National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 and provisions relating to the security sector



The Second **Jordanian** Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, 2022-2025.

### Relevant oversight body and budget

- The Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment<sup>32</sup>
- JOD 10,050,000/  
~EUR 12,612,841

### Objectives / strategic areas of engagement

JONAP II set out four outcomes:

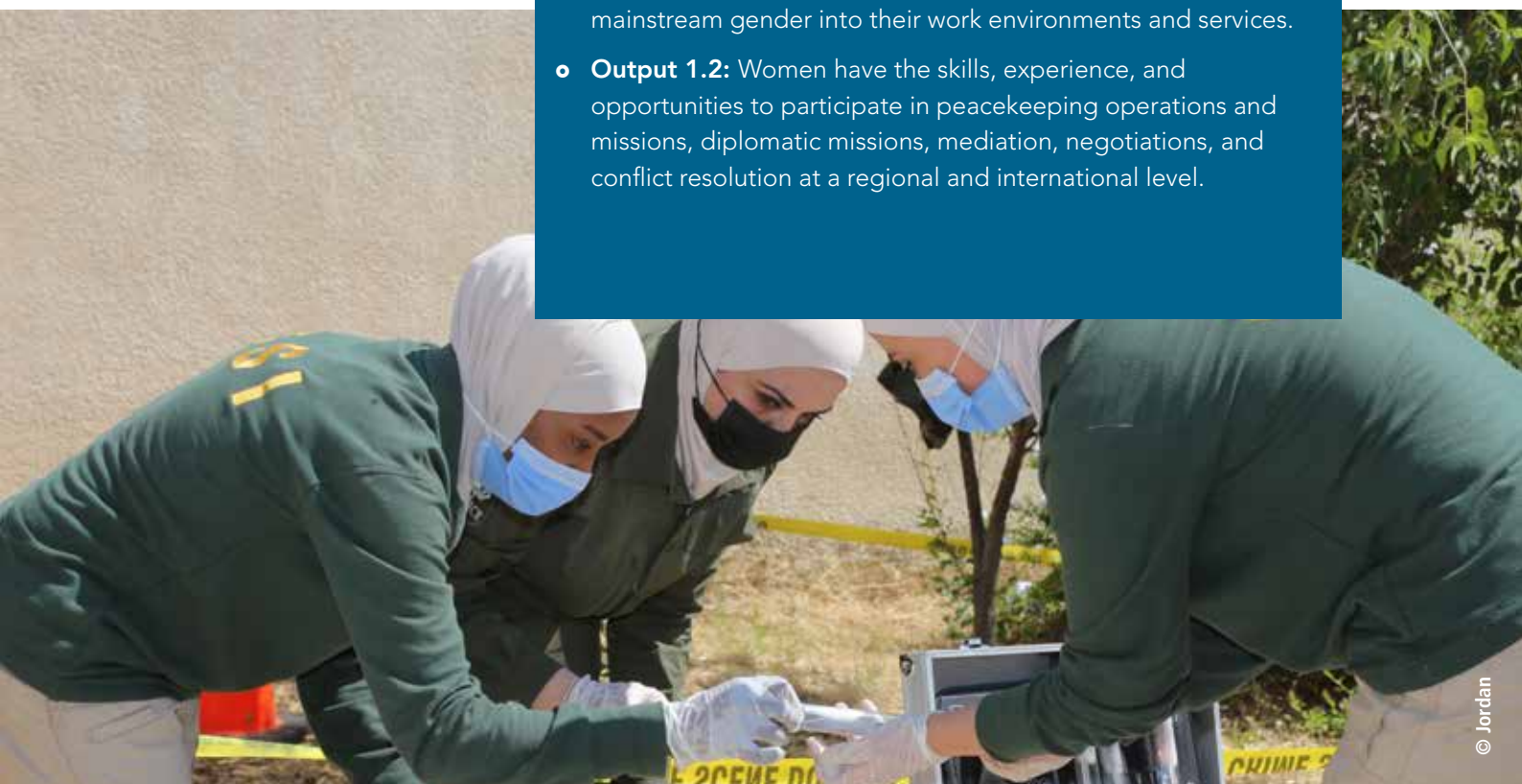
- Increasing women's participation in key sectors (security, the military, diplomacy, and justice).
- Ensuring women's involvement in decision-making for crisis response and prevention.
- Providing safe access to social protection and basic services for women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups.
- Promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women through education, the media, and community engagement.

**Provisions relating to the security sector:** The NAP includes a framework including indicators and benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the plan.

In addition to output one, the most relevant outcomes and outputs relating to the security sector are:

Jordanian security, military, diplomatic, and justice sectors are gender-responsive and women actively participate in them at all levels.

- **Output 1.1:** Security, military, diplomatic, and justice sectors have increased their knowledge and capacities on developing and implementing responsive policies, strategies, and plans to mainstream gender into their work environments and services.
- **Output 1.2:** Women have the skills, experience, and opportunities to participate in peacekeeping operations and missions, diplomatic missions, mediation, negotiations, and conflict resolution at a regional and international level.





## Lebanon, National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 2019-2022

### Relevant oversight body and budget

- The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW)
- LBP 22,604,424,000 / ~EUR 12,834,013

### Objectives / strategic areas of engagement

The NAP includes a detailed action plan with specific targets, indicators, and responsible institutions, as well as a budget and a monitoring framework.

The NAP has 5 strategic priorities:

- Increasing women's participation in governance and conflict prevention.
- Promoting women's roles in preventing conflict and extremism.
- Protecting women and girls from violence and exploitation.
- Responding to women's needs in disasters and conflicts.
- Amending laws to prevent discrimination and to protect women and girls.

### Provisions relating to the security sector

#### Outcome 1:

Women's representation and participation in the defence and security sectors has increased by 1% on a yearly basis.

#### Outputs include:

- **Output 1.1:** Women's participation in the security and defence sectors has increased, and security institutions have improved gender sensitivity.
- **Output 1.2:** Women's participation in the security and defence sectors is being encouraged through advocacy and awareness-raising.
- **Output 1.3:** Obstacles are being removed, and women are being encouraged to join the security and defence sectors.
- **Output 1.4:** Progress on the status of women in the security and defence sectors is being measured.

The security sector is also referenced under output (1.2) in reference to tackling sexual and gender-based violence: *Improved capacity of the justice, security, and health sectors to provide adequate protection for girls and women.*



**Morocco**, NAP not publicly available <sup>33</sup>, 2022-2024

### Relevant oversight body and budget

The oversight body is an interministerial committee led by the The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Overseas

### Objectives / strategic areas of engagement

In a presentation made before the Security Council in March 2023, Morocco's Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family stated that the NAP had been adopted as an integrated policy framework focusing on three areas:

- (1) preventive diplomacy, mediation, and peacekeeping;
- (2) promotion of a culture of peace and equality;
- (3) women's economic participation.<sup>34</sup>



**Palestine**<sup>35</sup>, The Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, 2020-2024

### Relevant oversight body and budget

- The Higher National Committee for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325
- The exact budget is not available, however in 2024 the budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (together with other institutions) fell under the social protection budget: 17.6% of the public budget (571 million ILS) / approximatively EUR 145,066,547

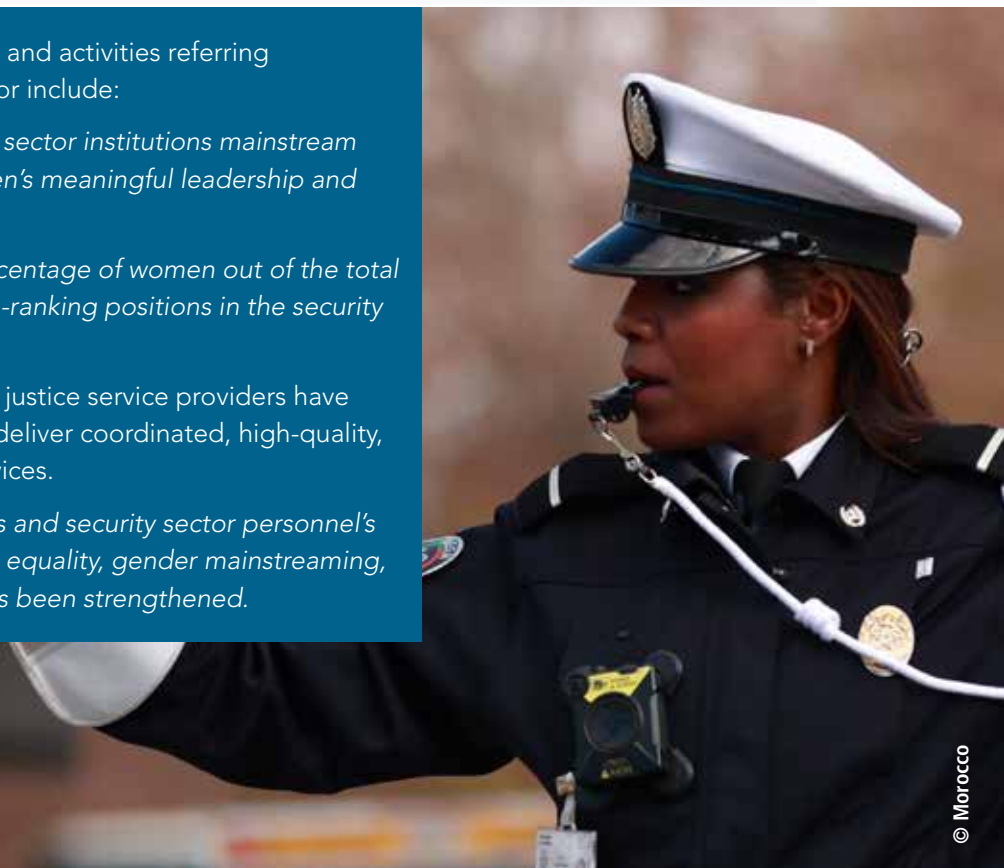
### Objectives / strategic areas of engagement

The NAP is organized around the 4 pillars of the UNSCR 1325: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery.

### Provisions relating to the security sector

Detailed outcomes, indicators, and activities referring specifically to the security sector include:

- **Outcome 3.2:** *The security sector institutions mainstream gender and promote women's meaningful leadership and participation at all levels*
- **Indicator 3.2.2:** *The percentage of women out of the total personnel who hold high-ranking positions in the security sector.*
- **Output 1.2.2:** Security and justice service providers have increased their capacity to deliver coordinated, high-quality, and gender responsive services.
- **Output 3.2.2:** *Gender units and security sector personnel's capacity in terms of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and women's leadership has been strengthened.*





**Tunisia**<sup>36</sup>, National Action Plan 2018-2022 to implement UNSCR 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” and its complementary resolutions, 2018-2022

#### Relevant oversight body and budget

- The Ministry of Women and Family, Childhood, and the elderly
- Budget not disclosed

#### Objectives / strategic areas of engagement

**Goal:** Empower women and girls to contribute to peace, stability, and combatting gender-based discrimination, extremism, and terrorism.

##### Objectives:

- Protecting women and girls from violence and discrimination.
- Ensuring women’s safety, health, and human rights, and facilitating access to justice.
- Increasing women’s involvement in politics, public life, and decision-making.
- Strengthening women’s roles in peace, reconstruction, and terrorism prevention.

**Provisions relating to the security sector:** The plan includes a comprehensive set of actions and indicators aimed at achieving the stated objectives.

#### Law Enforcement Focus Areas

- Mechanisms to protect women and girls against violence.
- Procedures to protect women and girls affected by terrorism and conflict.
- Services ensuring human rights for women, girls, and female refugees.
- Database on women’s and girls’ engagement in public life.
- Access to justice, including transitional justice.
- Service delivery for women and girls, including refugees.
- System for detecting human rights violations.
- Rehabilitation of judicial and security systems

A number of activities to achieve the stated objectives focus on capacity-building for national actors, including law enforcement, on various thematic areas including SGBV and UNSCR 1325.



## 1.2 Institutional policies and action plans

The growing international attention on women's participation in law enforcement and gender-responsive policing has driven reforms across two interconnected areas. First, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa have adopted institutional gender policies and action plans to put the commitments made under frameworks such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 into action, with international technical and financial support. Second, all countries in the region have adopted relevant national legislation leading to the establishment of specialized services and standard operating procedures that require departments that address sexual and gender-based violence, crimes against children, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling - which often fall under the same investigative departments - to be staffed by women officers. Together, these developments mark a gradual shift from policy intent to institutional practice, embedding gender considerations more firmly within the structure and service delivery of security institutions.

Institutional policies and gender strategies within the security and law enforcement sectors have become a central mechanism for translating international commitments on gender equality and women and peace - such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 - into concrete action.

With financial and technical support from international partners, several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region have taken steps towards advancing gender considerations in the security sector, in particular through the development of institutional gender strategies and action plans, the appointment of dedicated staff, and coordination mechanisms. Such initiatives often focus on increasing the number of women recruits, making a wider range of roles and assignments available to them, and improving their representation in leadership and decision-making positions.

Jordan and Palestine have established similar gender mainstreaming frameworks for their police



services. The Palestinian Civilian Police's (PCP) Gender Strategy 2017-2022 focused on training and capacity building for staff on gender related issues, ensuring gender considerations are included in key institutional policy frameworks and financial mechanisms and increasing the number of women officers being recruited and promoted. Jordan's Public Security Department (PSD) Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan takes a broader approach that focuses on building an enabling environment and on supporting the recruitment, deployment, and promotion of women, and includes significantly more recommended measures to be implemented (31 measures).

The strategies and policies developed are often informed by the findings of self-assessments or gender audits. The development of Jordan's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy<sup>37</sup> was informed by the findings of a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) conducted by the PSD and a Gender Self-Assessment (GSA) completed in 2020. The PCP's Gender Unit had already launched its gender strategy in 2016, based on an environment scanning process that used SWOT<sup>38</sup> analysis methodology. Although Lebanon does not yet have a gender strategy, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) established a Gender Equality team in 2023 which conducted a gender audit in 2024.<sup>39</sup>

Several agencies have established specialized units and/or dedicated staff, with support and significant advocacy efforts from the international community. As early as 2008, Palestine was the first country to establish a dedicated gender unit within its national police service. Subsequently, the Council of Ministers Decision No. 08/65/12 transformed the women's units that had already been set up within ministries into specialized gender units. Both Jordanian and Palestinian agencies have developed institutional mechanisms to champion gender equality as part of their gender strategies. These include the creation of dedicated gender units, as well as the designation of gender focal points or gender advisers and the formation of multi-stakeholder platforms called Gender Consultative Committees. Lebanon has appointed a Gender Focal Point, and in 2012 Egypt established a Gender and Human Rights Sector, headed by an Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Gender Affairs who reports directly to the Minister of Interior<sup>40</sup>.



These institutional efforts demonstrate a growing commitment and a shift in attitudes, at least towards women following a career in law enforcement. As a woman officer from Lebanon noted,

**In our training centers, there was nothing specifically designated for women – no bathrooms, no training facilities for women. Now they started to buy-in that women are in law enforcement, but in 2001, it was not easy for the community to accept women as officers, especially in the institutions of the military and the police.”**

Despite these efforts, there is still a significant gap between policy and practice. As pointed out by Col. Khawla Fadlallah from Palestine:

**Most strategies focused on women’s participation, deployment, and promotion lack implementation. For example, even if female officers want to work night shifts and their organization allows it, they may still be barred from doing so.”**

This highlights a critical issue: the existence of policies and plans is not enough, and organizations and officers may continue to fail to put them into practice, rendering them ineffective. The disconnect between policy and practice can lead to situations where women officers are prevented from fully contributing to the workforce, despite being permitted to do so on paper. For instance, biases or logistical obstacles may prevent women officers from working night shifts, even if policy allows it. To address this issue, concerted efforts must be made to ensure that strategies are not only developed but also implemented, enforced, and monitored. This requires sustained commitment and accountability from law enforcement agencies in order to bridge the gap between policy and practice and to allow women officers to fully contribute to the workforce and reach their full potential.



© Lebanon



## HIGHLIGHT 1:

# Jordan's Public Security Directorate Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) adopted its first Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for 2021-2024<sup>41</sup>. The strategy is complemented by a Strategic Training Framework for Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points to be put in place at PSD training centres.

The aim of the strategy is to strengthen the institutional approach towards achieving gender equality and to institutionalize gender mainstreaming as a key policy component of the security sector's strategies, policies, and operations.

### The Strategy focuses on three main goals:

- Creating an environment and culture that enhances gender equality, including structural enhancements such as trained personnel and accessible childcare services.
- Embedding gender equality and gender-responsive strategies based on the needs of women and men in the PSD.
- Ensuring robust internal and external oversight of gender mainstreaming outcomes.

It includes a total of 31 recommended measures to be implemented and specifically addresses the gaps and deficiencies that may inhibit the full and meaningful participation of women and their representation in the PSD.

The Gender Unit deliverables include the appointment of gender ambassadors and the provision of mentoring sessions on leadership for women officers to be deployed in UN peacekeeping operations<sup>42</sup>.

## JORDANIAN GENDER OFFICE

- Gender Office established in 2020.
- Gender adviser appointed in 2020.
- Gender officers appointed in 2021.
- Gender champions appointed from among senior officers – Brigadier Generals and Colonels – in 2021.
- The first gender legal adviser appointed in 2022.
- A Gender Affairs Special Unit was established in PSD in 2025.
- The 2026 - 2028 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is currently being drafted.

### Objectives

- Overseeing the implementation of the annual plan for integrating the gender perspective across all departments of the PSD.
- Providing expert opinions, specialized advice, and guidance to PSD units and departments in accordance with the strategic plan.
- Promoting gender awareness and a positive understanding of gender issues among PSD personnel by organizing awareness-raising workshops and delivering lectures and training sessions across all PSD units and departments.
- Monitoring and analyzing national and international developments related to gender equality.
- Building individual and collective capacities to perform functional roles and responsibilities, and to transfer and manage knowledge across all administrative, leadership, operational, and modern technical pathways.



## HIGHLIGHT 2:

### Tunisia's Ministry of Interior sectoral plan for mainstreaming gender

In order to implement the 2018 *National Plan for the Inclusion and Institutionalization of Gender*, sectoral plans had to be prepared by the relevant Ministries. In June 2021, the Ministry of Interior formed working groups responsible for gender mainstreaming in the various ministerial plans and budgets, and prepared a sectoral plan for mainstreaming gender into planning, programming, and budgeting to eliminate all forms of discrimination and achieve equality in development, rights, and duties.

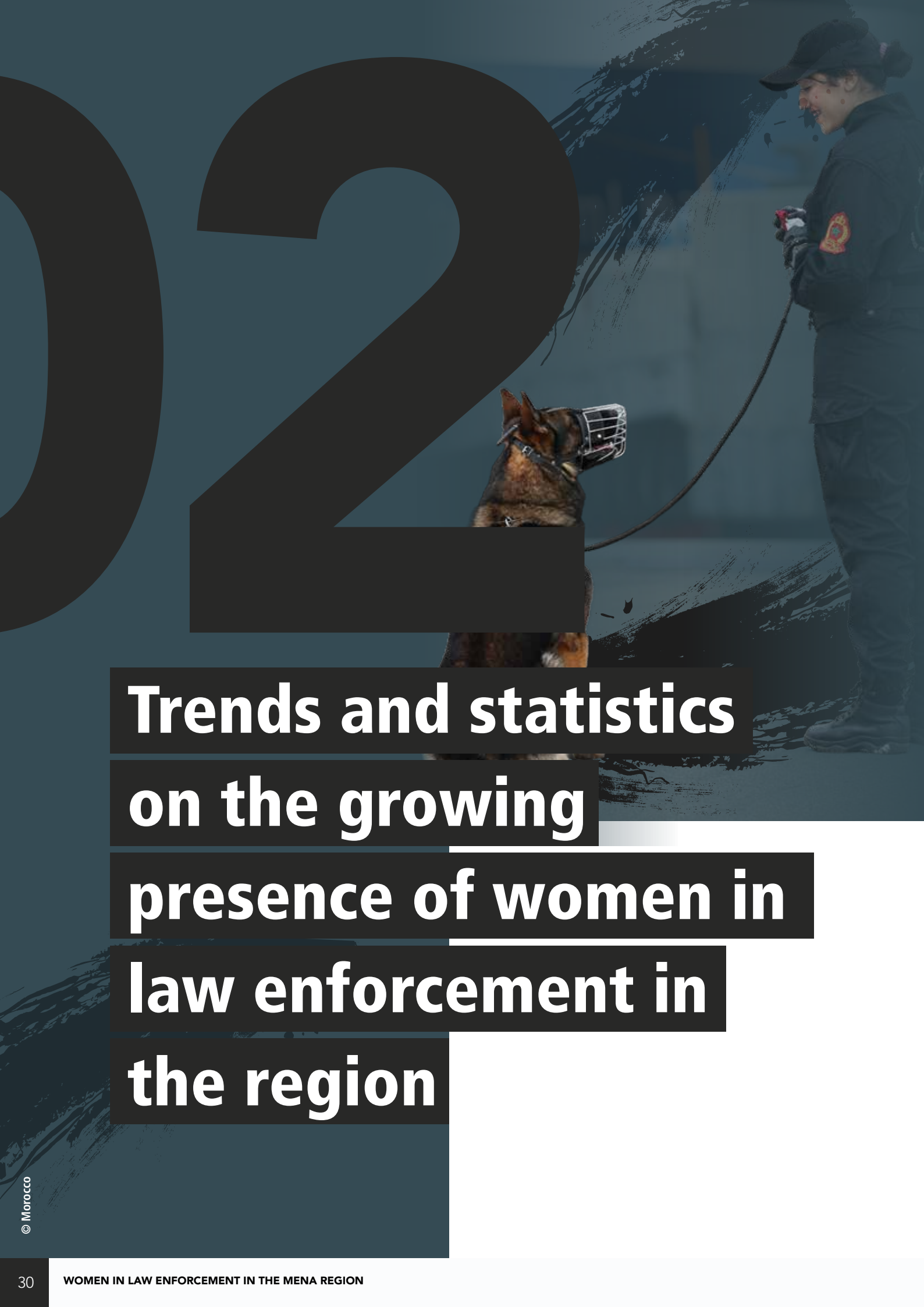
#### This plan focuses on:

- Gradually increasing the recruitment rate for women in the security sector.
- Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in terms of job appointments and leadership positions, and conducting a qualitative and quantitative assessment to identify gender disparities.
- Ensuring equal opportunities in terms of access to continuous training, internships, and overseas missions.
- Improving working environments and conditions for women and enhancing their health and social support.
- Identifying and addressing gender-based discrimination in legislative and regulatory texts and proposing legislative initiatives to close legal gaps.
- Enhancing women's professional capacities and creating more opportunities for them to take up positions of responsibility and participate in decision-making, and improving their representation in committees, councils, and bodies.
- Changing mindsets through a focus on training and awareness-raising.

#### Activities conducted by the General Directorate of National Security in 2023 include:

- Conducting a survey to identify the obstacles preventing women from participating in continuous training.
- Setting a target of at least 15% for the participation of women officers in all training sessions.
- Organizing awareness raising days at a central level (in the capital, Tunis) and at a regional level (in other governorates across Tunisia) for policewomen in the National Security forces, to encourage them to participate in continuous training and to raise awareness about its importance for their professional development.
- Organizing training sessions focusing on the objectives of the sectoral plan for integrating a gender-sensitive approach within the Ministry of Interior.
- Preparing an educational toolkit on gender mainstreaming.
- Strengthening the National Security Program communication plan through training sessions for staff in the Ministry of Interior's media and communication departments.

In 2023, in line with the 2018 National Plan to mainstream gender in planning, programming, and budgeting, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) developed a Gender Card. The MoF requested that all ministries include the Gender Card with the annual performance project documents for all submitted budgets, including those of the Ministry of Interior, and programme owners, such as the National Security Program, which covers the National Guard, National Security, and Civil Protection forces. The Gender Card is intended to highlight the achievements and challenges, and the work plan and financial estimates programmed to achieve the strategic objectives set out in the sectoral plans.



# **Trends and statistics on the growing presence of women in law enforcement in the region**

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## Police cultures and the meaningful participation of women

In many agencies around the world, women police officers are still tokens or small minorities. As they constitute less than 15% of the workforce, their minority status often leads to heightened visibility and scrutiny, and there is increased attention on their behavior and actions. As a result, women officers may feel like they are constantly being judged and evaluated, not just on their individual performance, but also as representatives of their gender<sup>43</sup>. This feeling of pressure and intense scrutiny has often been expressed by women officers interviewed for this regional overview, which suggests that they perceive they are held to higher standards than their male colleagues. Increasing the proportion of women officers in policing may contribute to overcoming this challenge, at least in part, and to ensuring that women officers can enjoy meaningful participation in the police.

Research has shown that when women make up 30% to 35% of the workforce, they are no longer seen as tokens or outliers, but rather as integral members of the team. This “critical mass” is expected to make it easier for them to define their roles within the police force and can lead to a shift in organizational culture and policy which means that women’s perspectives and experiences are more likely to be valued and incorporated into decision-making processes<sup>44</sup>.

This change is expected to occur through several mechanisms. First, as more women join police departments, their presence becomes normalized, gradually altering perceptions and attitudes among male colleagues. Secondly, the environment within police departments is likely to evolve as the number of women increases, potentially eroding the traditional masculine culture. Finally, the growing emphasis on community policing, which prioritizes communication, trust, collaboration, and partnerships with citizens, creates more opportunities for women police as the skills traditionally associated with women are seen as valuable in this approach<sup>45</sup>.

These hypotheses have been confirmed by women officers from the MENA region. Officers stated that the work environment for women officers has improved over the span of their respective careers and many women officers report increased acceptance and respect from their male colleagues. This trend reinforces the theory that an increase in the number of women in law enforcement can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture where women officers can not only strive but thrive.

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## Regional trends regarding women’s access to policing careers<sup>46</sup>

Women’s participation in law enforcement in the countries covered by this regional overview is not new. Jordan started recruiting women into its law enforcement agencies as early as 1972, and Tunisia and Algeria followed suit in 1973. Today, more women are employed by police agencies in the region than ever before. Their role and workplace experiences have also evolved significantly from the moment they were first employed, in many cases as police matrons in the 1970s.

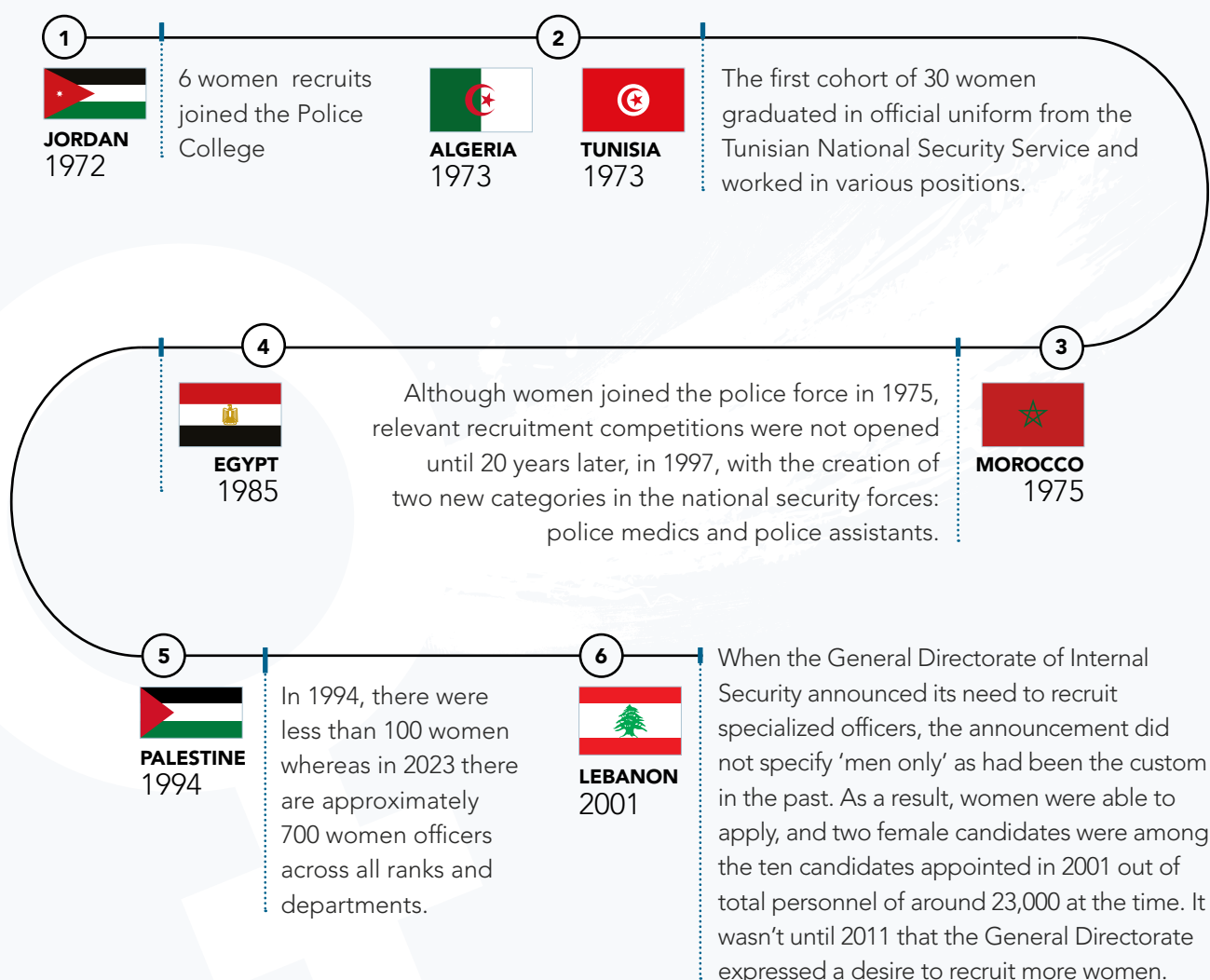
Police agencies have also embraced strategies and policies to employ more women police officers, most often as a result of recent legislative directions. This has led to an increase in the number of women over the last four decades, in particular over the past twenty years. In the 1970s, women officers were a novelty. At best, a handful of women officers were recruited for several thousand male officers. They generally occupied strictly defined positions, in many cases without the rank or the roles and

responsibilities traditionally associated with law enforcement, such as the right to carry firearms or the right to make arrests. By the year 2000, the percentage of women officers had increased in almost all countries in the region. Today, although they are still a minority, as can be seen in the figures below, the number of women police officers stands at between 4% in Lebanon and 10% in Tunisia and Algeria.

More importantly, although women may have been present in law enforcement careers, in some cases for over half a century, in most agencies the

range of areas to which they are deployed has only diversified over the past few years. Women officers have only recently attained some of the highest ranks in the history of their respective agencies. For example, women began joining the police force in Morocco in 1975, but relevant recruitment competitions were not opened until 20 years later in 1998, when the first class of officers, consisting of 10 women officers in official uniform, graduated. This allowed uniformed women police officers to be recruited to undertake field roles, initially as traffic police and patrol officers, and later in units dealing with minors.

## WHEN WERE THE FIRST WOMEN OFFICERS RECRUITED?



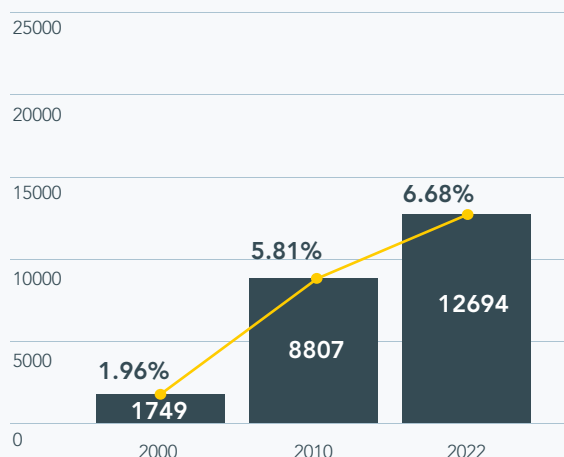
There continue to be differences between the number of uniformed and non-uniformed women personnel and great disparities in their presence across the various ranks. Women officers are more present in the lower ranks, and they are highly under-represented in specialized units and supervisory work<sup>47</sup>.

The data presented has been disaggregated between uniformed and non-uniformed personnel because, in certain contexts, this distinction signals a potential difference in officers' rights and responsibilities. For example, in some agencies, non-uniformed officers may not have the right to conduct arrests or carry arms, and they may not have access to a full law enforcement career

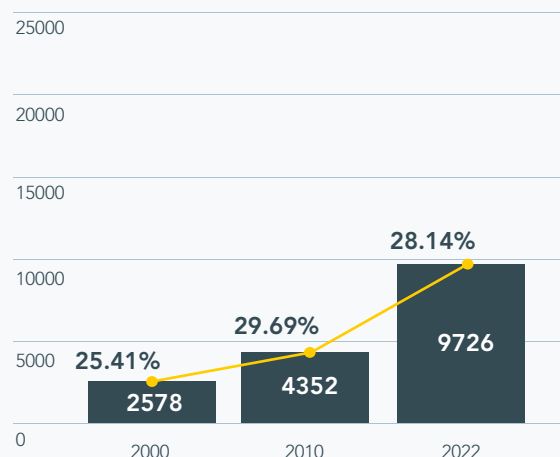
or to specific departments or positions, unlike uniformed officers. In all countries, non-uniformed personnel include technical and specialized staff, some of whom may hold leadership positions. This may include biometric specialists, psychologists, and medical staff. In all countries, non-uniformed personnel also includes administrative and support staff. However, the distinction between uniformed and non-uniformed staff is not valid in all countries. For example, in Tunisia, both uniformed and plainclothes sworn officers have the same authority and access to all ranks and specializations. Therefore, given the wide differences in the way the law enforcement profession is structured from one country to another, any comparative analysis should take these substantial differences into account.

## ALGERIA

### Breakdown of uniformed women police

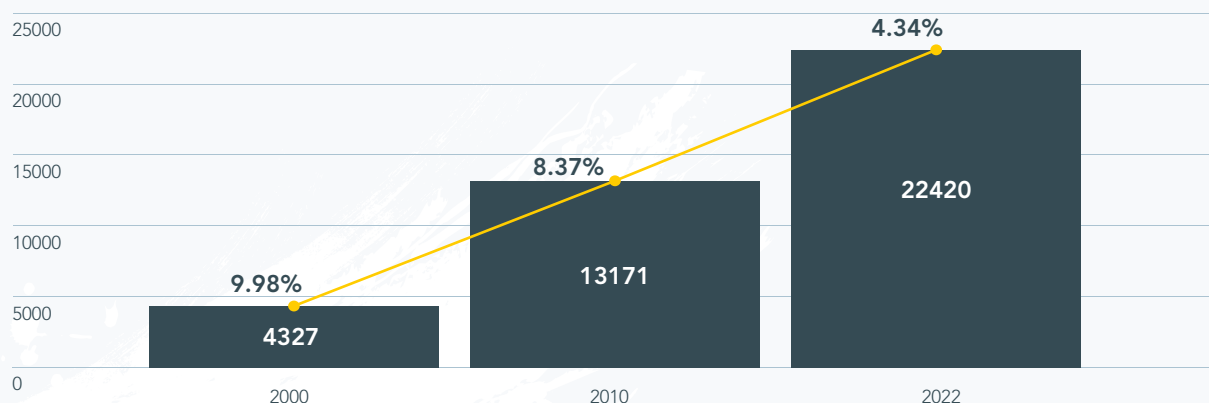


### Breakdown of non-uniformed women staff members



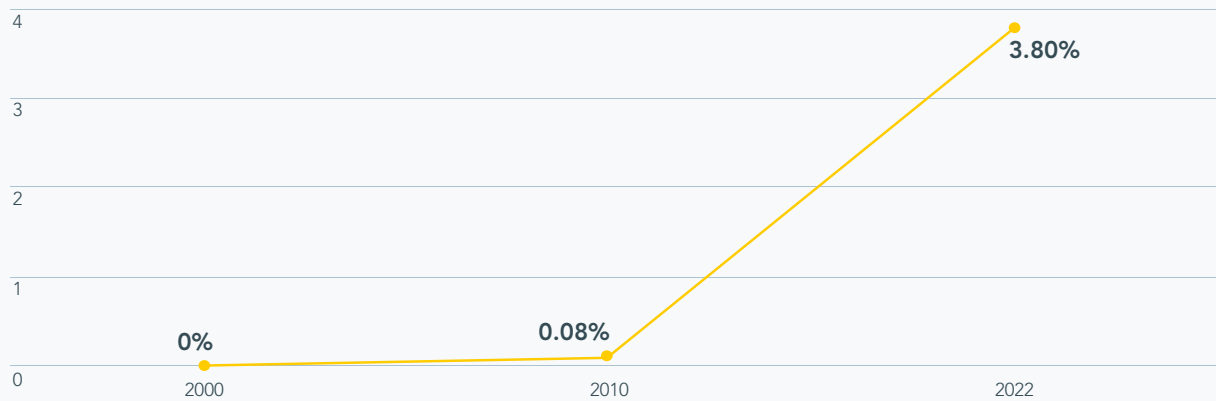
### Overall numbers (including uniformed and non-uniformed women staff members)

The number of female police officers has more than quintupled since 2000, with their share increasing from 4.34% to 9.98%.



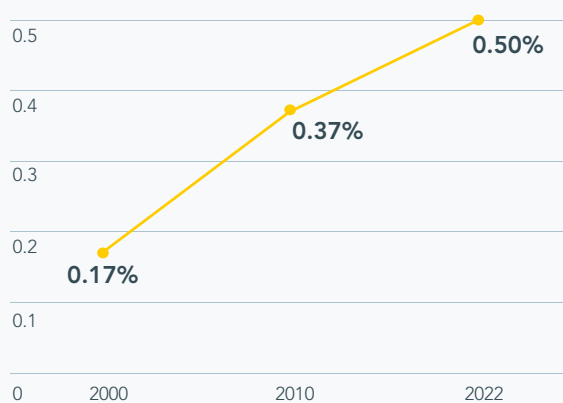
## LEBANON<sup>48</sup>

### Uniformed Women Police Officers

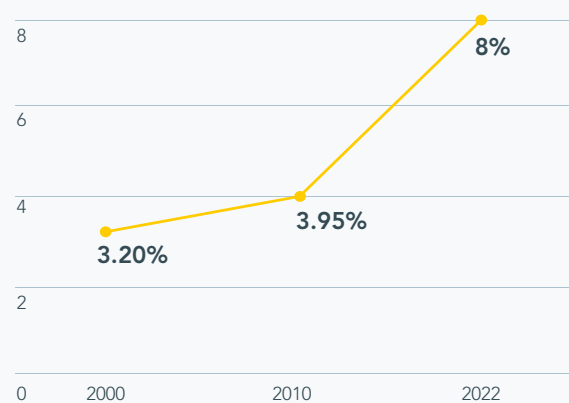


## MOROCCO<sup>49</sup>

### Uniformed Women Police Officers

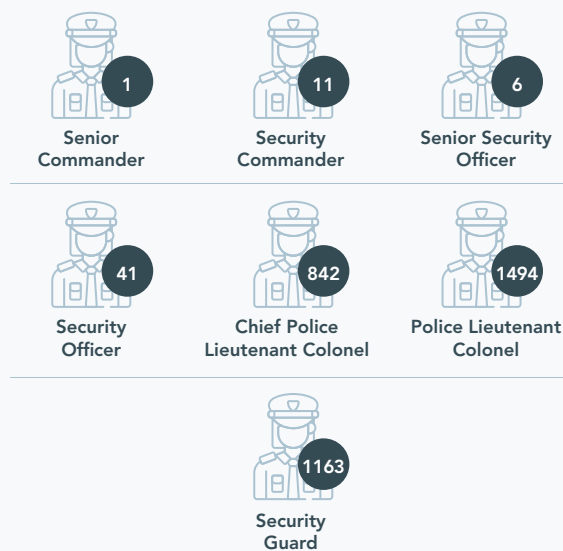


### Civilian Women Police Officers



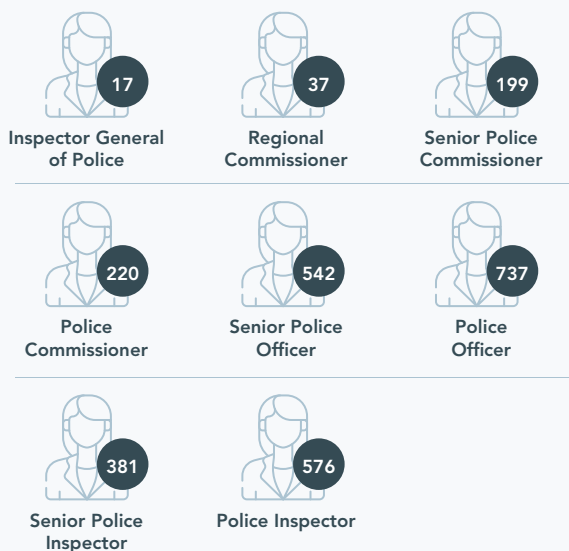
Total number of  
officers in uniform:

**3558**



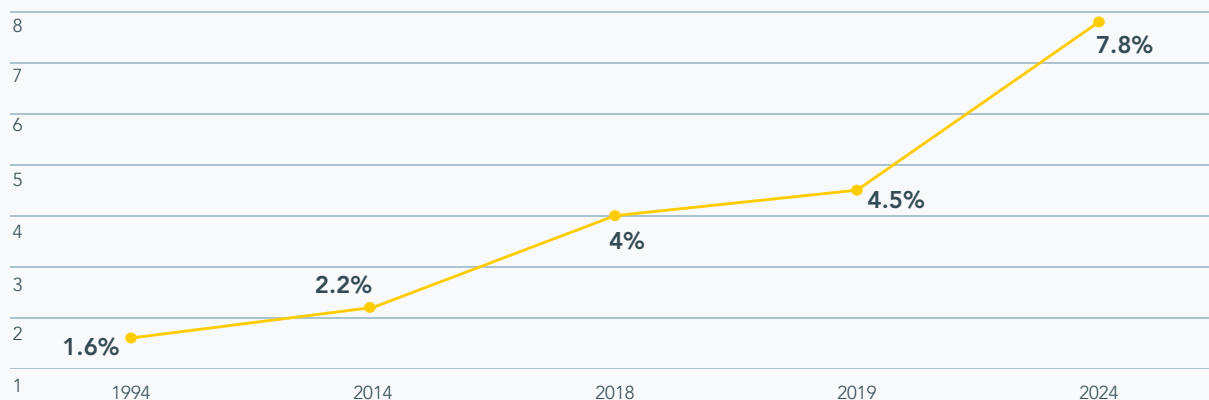
Total number of officers  
in civilian attire:

**2709**



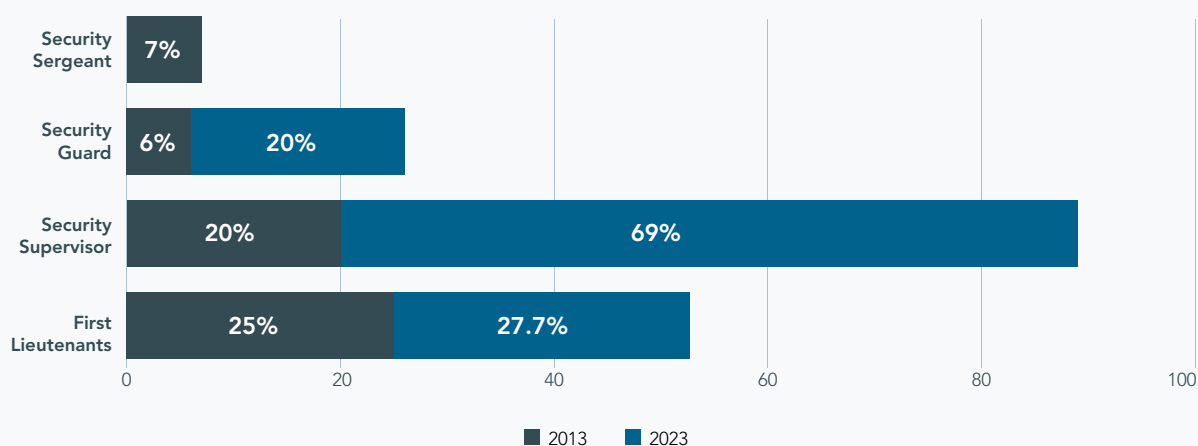
## PALESTINE

### Uniformed Women Police Officers

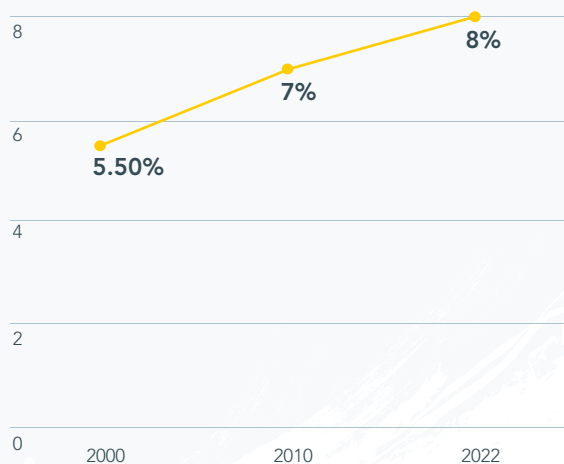


## TUNISIA

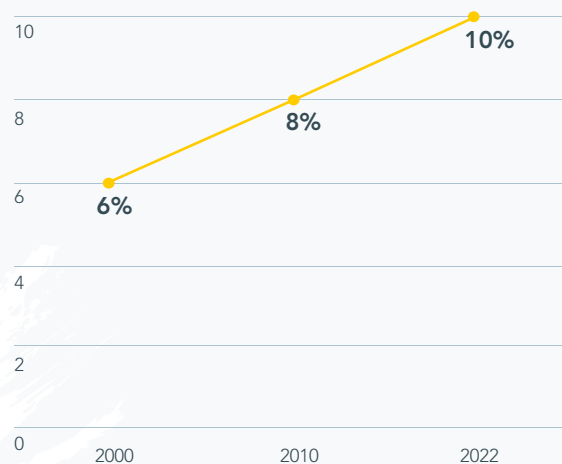
### The evolution of women's recruitment in Tunisian corps



### Uniformed Women Police Officers



### Civilian Women Police Officers





# **Empowering women in law enforcement from recruitment to progression**

## **Diversifying the policing rank**

As is the case globally, police organizations in the region are also striving to improve their gender diversity in order to foster inclusiveness, better reflect the demographics of the communities they serve, and address specific operational needs. This includes deploying women officers in



situations where their presence is essential, such as conducting searches of women offenders or victims, investigating crimes committed against women or children, providing protection for high-ranking female dignitaries, or supporting women who are victims of crime. Increasing the numbers of women officers means they can be deployed across a range of departments and progress to specialized and leadership roles. Increasing the number of women recruited into law enforcement agencies has therefore been one of the goals for most law enforcement agencies in the region; one that is also easy to quantify. Several countries included this goal and / or set numerical targets in their agencies' gender strategies or in their respective UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans. For example, Jordan's PSD Gender Strategy includes targets for recruiting women and for their participation in general, as well as in operational, field, and senior leadership roles. It measures progress through a monitoring and evaluation system and the proposed annual 'Women in PSD' report. The Strategy also calls for a review of current practices to ensure there is no discrimination. In Lebanon, women recruits began to be accepted into the profession in 2001, and in the subsequent recruitment drive in 2011, the

percentage of women recruits had already reached over 30% of the total number of officers recruited<sup>50</sup>. In 2024, a total of 770 police officers were recruited, including 432 women.

Overall, officers felt that there has been a notable shift in the security institution over the past two decades, marked by a steady increase in the recruitment and acceptance of women in various roles in the security sector. Additionally, police leadership pays increased attention to the needs of women in training institutions and takes steps to address the challenges identified.

However, although the figures help us understand trends at a macro level and track progress (or regression) over time, ultimately it is not just about the numbers. While focusing on numerical gains through recruitment is important in terms of strategic ambitions and convenient for setting numerical targets, it oversimplifies the more challenging task of analysing the deployment and promotion of women to roles seen as less traditional for women, such as operational departments, where their skills and talents can also have an impact.



### HIGHLIGHT 3:

## Morocco's Recruitment and Promotion Strategies

The General Directorate of National Security in the Kingdom of Morocco has adopted an approach based mainly on specializations, which gives women access to all departments and all responsibilities within national law enforcement agencies.

In 2001, the revised National Security Personnel Statute enabled women to advance through all police ranks, from security guard to Police Commissioner. The 2019 revisions extended this right to include the rank of Senior Police Commissioner, specifically for highly qualified individuals with doctorates and engineers in specific scientific and technical fields. This approach has resulted in a 30% increase in the number of women personnel in 2023 compared to 2015.

This new system has also led to an increase in the number of women police officers reaching the higher ranks of General Supervisor, with the expectation that in the foreseeable future they will reach the highest rank, that of Security Governor. The changes have already had an effect, and as of 2023, 298 women held leadership positions in the General Directorate of National Security, compared to only 46 women police officers in 2015.

More recently, the Moroccan Directorate General of National Security also strengthened its communication and public relations in order to reach a wider pool of candidates and encourage women officers to apply. The organization implemented a communication strategy designed to highlight the role of women in policing by showcasing female officers through TV and radio features, social media, and the police magazine. It also produced specialized reports, encouraged qualified women officers to give media interviews, and ensured women were properly represented at its annual open house events. These efforts have

### WOMEN IN THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE

The admission of women into the Moroccan police as social counselors and nurses. 1956

1975 The creation of two new roles for women police: paramedics and police assistants.

Graduation of the first class, consisting of **10 women officers in official uniform**, assigned to traffic units, urban patrol units, and juvenile units. 1998

1999 Strengthening the presence of women within the national police with **the graduation of 103 uniformed women officers**.

The revised National Security Personnel Statute allows women to advance through all police ranks. 2001

2019 Amending the statute of national security personnel to allow holders of advanced degrees in various specialties to join the police, thereby doubling the number of women police officers.

widely captured the public interest, especially among young women, and have contributed to a rise in women applicants, from about 7,000 in 2019 to 16,000 in 2023.

These initiatives demonstrate that intentional strategies, including analyzing current and future skills and knowledge requirements, tailoring job profiles to attract a diverse range of candidates, and refining assessment processes, are crucial for creating more equitable and effective recruitment programmes that can attract more women candidates to the profession. To achieve this, it is

essential to collect and analyse applicant data and assess the performance of different demographic groups.

While gender diversity is important for the delivery of law enforcement services, recruitment practices should be mindful of the barriers that may prevent women from coming forward. For women to achieve greater representation across the various areas of law enforcement work and subsequently in leadership roles, a larger and more consistent stream of women need to enter the profession in the first place.



#### HIGHLIGHT 4:

## Expanding Women's Roles in Egypt's Security Sector

Egypt's Ministry of Interior recognizes the vital role women play in advancing development, and has therefore increased the participation of women officers across all sectors of the ministry. A significant milestone was achieved in 2018, when the Ministry began admitting a greater number of women to the Police Academy and the Security Assistants Institute. Since then, female officers have undertaken advanced training programmes aligned with the latest instructional methodologies and supported by modern technological tools aimed at enhancing their physical and operational capabilities. These programmes have improved women officers' performance and opened up new horizons for women to participate in specialized units. For example, the successful completion of rigorous physical and combat training enabled them to enter new security fields requiring high levels of technical proficiency, including special forces and VIP protection assignments. In addition, Egypt has established its first all-women civil protection team, which operates alongside rescue units and conducts inspections for explosives and hazardous materials.



### 3.1

## From administration to the frontline

Historically, women police officers have encountered challenges in being accepted into the profession. This has been partly due to the stereotype that women lack the physical strength and other traditionally masculine traits, such as toughness, which were perceived as essential for policing. However, empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated that women officers are equally capable of performing all duties. Furthermore, the demands of modern security have shifted the focus away from physical strength. Today's major security challenges, including cybercrime, counterterrorism, transnational organized crime, and the advent of AI-related crime require a different type of skillset, one which is more technical and analytical in nature. The need for a police force which is close to the community also increases the value of interpersonal skills and empathy, which are useful for effective citizen engagement "and victim support, areas where mixed-gender teams often excel. In this context, fully integrating women across operational and investigative roles is not only a question of fairness, but first and foremost an operational imperative for more effective, trusted policing.

Therefore, while acceptance by peers is important, the opportunity to be assigned to specialized units and subsequently rise to higher ranks is also a significant factor when looking at women's participation in law enforcement. Women's progression into new areas of work and at all levels of the career ladder often reflects broader shifts in organizational attitudes towards workforce parity.

In parallel, women in command positions or operational roles serve as powerful role models inside and outside the institution by challenging traditional perceptions<sup>51</sup>. As Commissioner Berkia noted, the presence of women officers in police uniform on the streets of Rabat marked a significant shift in public perception of women's roles in law enforcement. This, in turn, paved the way for women to access police missions and assignments that had previously been reserved for male officers only, demonstrating the potential for women officers to drive meaningful change and break down barriers in the policing profession. These women trailblazers are critical to fostering organizational change by demonstrating that women have the capability to undertake a full range of roles and ranks within security institutions.



**In Rabat, the first public appearance of women police officers in uniform completely transformed the city's image, giving it a new dimension. This was widely reported in the media and newspapers as a historic precedent and a qualitative shift towards integrating women into the police force.**

**This change marked the first step towards women joining all police units and undertaking all security tasks that had previously been the exclusive domain of male police officers."**

Division Commissioner Amal Berkia, Morocco

The rise of community policing and women's only departments, and the establishment of specialized departments or teams to investigate crimes involving gender-based violence, human trafficking, and crimes against children often present an



© Morocco

opportunity for women officers to be deployed to non-administrative, more operational roles. For example, in 2022, Jordan's PSD created a special crime scene team - the first women's investigation team - to investigate cases involving women, with the aim of establishing a gender-sensitive approach to documenting, securing, and preserving evidence. In Tunisia the number of women participating in operational departments is highest in specialized units dealing with crimes of violence against women and children, at 35 percent.

Similar progress can be seen in Palestine, with the establishment of dedicated structures over the past decade: the Family and Child Protection Department was created in 2008 to follow domestic violence cases, followed in 2010 by the Juvenile Protection Department which handles cases involving children in conflict with the law. Both were staffed from the outset by women police officers. In 2014, the two departments were merged into the Family and Juvenile Protection Department. These developments contributed to a steady increase in the number of women participating across specialized departments and enabled them to take

on both field and administrative roles alongside their male colleagues.

Several countries in the region have also established specialized women-only special operations teams. This trend is well exemplified by Egypt, where as recently as 2021, the National Institute for Protection Detail and the Special Forces National Training Institute established their first all-women teams. These developments are the result of the need to provide culturally sensitive security details for high-profile women dignitaries travelling to the country, and is one of the outcomes of the newly ratified National Strategy for Women's Empowerment. Another example of women's participation in non-traditional roles can be seen in the Criminal Lab Department in Palestine, where 90% of the experts are women. These initiatives highlight the fact that, with the right education and training, women can excel in any profession, and that with political will and a strong commitment to advancing their meaningful participation in the policing career, it is possible to create a more inclusive work environment that allows women to thrive and contribute to law enforcement work.

## Remaining Challenges

**“Despite efforts and reforms, there are few women in high-ranking positions, recruitment rates are low, and when women are hired they tend to be in admin roles rather than operations...”** — Woman officer, Palestine

Although this research did not seek to analyse the challenges officers can come up against when seeking to be deployed in operational roles, discussions with officers suggest that the obstacles they face are similar to those found in other contexts. These challenges include a culture and policies which are not family-friendly and social expectations, as well as personal and professional factors, including a marked preference among many women police officers for desk-based, administrative work due to childcare and family responsibilities. Potential bias and stereotypes can also hinder women’s career advancement in security sectors, with women often being perceived as lacking the necessary experience or interest in higher-level roles.

Many officers agreed that a significant challenge when it comes to deploying women to operational roles lies with the women themselves. Many of the women police officers contacted as part of this research indicated that they were not necessarily keen to work in non-administrative roles that may involve shift work, longer working hours, or a certain level of danger. The reasons for this include family obligations, but also religious or

cultural reasons; the view that such work may not be appropriate for women. The burden and bias regarding women’s roles and responsibilities in society was present in all exchanges.

### ***A snapshot of women’s participation in various departments in Morocco and Tunisia***

Information on deployment opportunities for women is scarce at best. Limited information is available on women’s access to specialized assignments such as SWAT teams or their numerical representation. With the support of the Editorial Board members, we have been able to collect unique data sets on the deployment of women officers in various departments in Morocco and Tunisia.

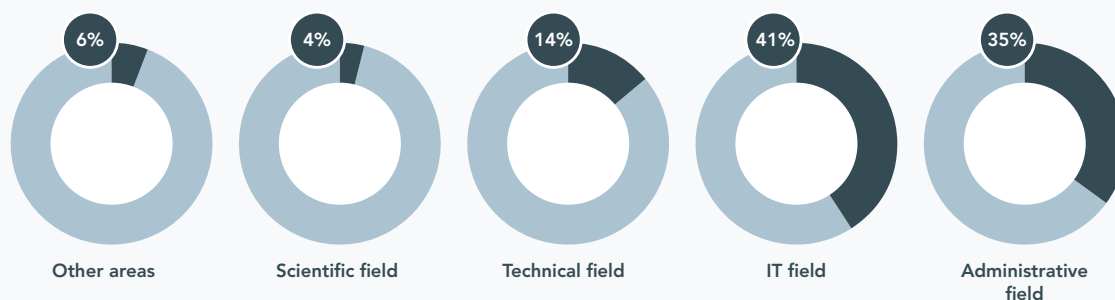


**We need to change women’s mentality and encourage them to pursue employment opportunities in non-traditional, more operational roles.”**

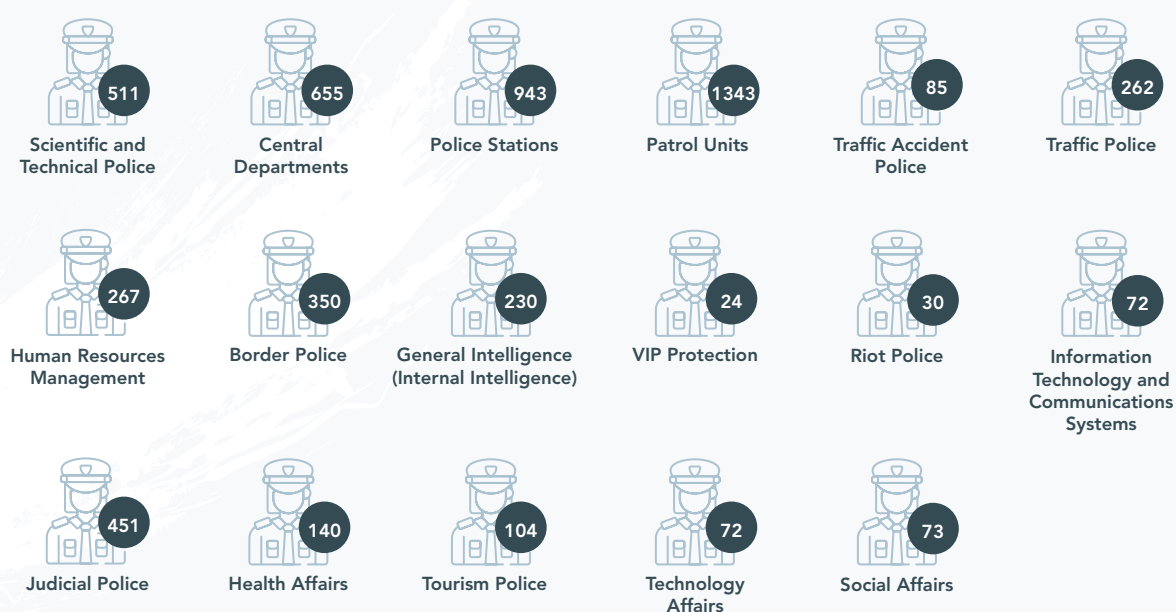
— woman officer, Tunisia



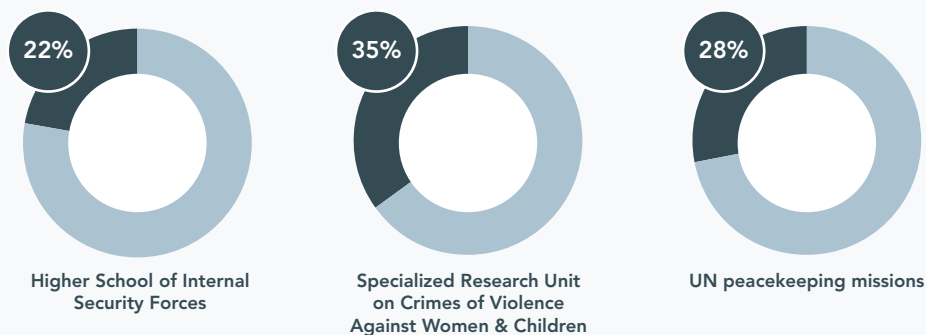
## Breakdown of women police officers in Morocco by specialization<sup>52</sup>



## Breakdown of women police officers in Morocco by areas of work



## Representation of Tunisian women officers in various sectors



## HIGHLIGHT 5:

### Paving the Way for Women in Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping is one area where police organizations in the region have made visible progress on gender diversity. The officers interviewed confirmed that numerical gains are closely tied to United Nations efforts in terms of participation targets, most notably the objective of 30% women by 2030, which has prompted many countries to expand deployment pipelines for women officers. Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia have all begun to deploy, or increase the deployment of, women to UN police missions, especially in recent years. In Tunisia, for example, the proportion of women participating in peacekeeping grew from 13% to 23% and efforts are being made to reach the 30% target by 2030.

Jordan has reported the creation of its first formed police unit, which included 14 policewomen in 2021, up to 16 by 2023, and included a dedicated output in its UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan on building women's skills and opportunities for peacekeeping operations:

#### **OUTPUT 1.2:**

*Women have the skills, experience and opportunities to participate in peacekeeping operations and missions, diplomatic missions, mediation, negotiations and conflict resolution at a regional and international level.*

Egypt has combined increased deployment with investment in preparation and training. In 2014, Egypt deployed its first woman police

officer to a UN mission, in Western Sahara.<sup>53</sup> In 2021, it established the Egyptian Peacekeeping Operations Training Centre (EPOTC), part of the National Police Academy, to deliver pre-deployment training for men and women officers from Egypt and abroad. In 2023, the Egyptian Formed Police Unit, along with MINUSMA, created three Search and Detect teams to counter Mali's persistent IED threat. One team is composed entirely of women police officers, the first all-women Search and Detect team ever deployed to a UN peacekeeping operation, operating near dirt roads frequently used by civilians and targeted by terrorist and armed groups.<sup>54</sup>



**During my one year, I was very successful and gained a great deal of experience. To me there was no alternative for success, as I was determined to pave the way for other women to come and join such international missions as I did, which is exactly what happened."**

— Major General Nahed Al-Wahy (Egypt)<sup>55</sup>.

These numerical advances reinforce the argument that quotas or numerical targets can be successful, at least in creating a space where women officers who are interested in joining peacekeeping missions can do so, and encourages countries to train and put forward qualified women personnel.

## 3.2 Women as leaders in law enforcement

### THE HIGHEST-RANKING WOMEN OFFICERS AS OF 2024



**ALGERIA**

General Police Controller, Central Director of Health, Social Activity and Sports



**EGYPT**

Assistant Minister of Interior / Secretary for Human Rights Sector



**LEBANON**

Colonel, IT Department



**JORDAN**

Brigadier, Commander of the Women's Police



**TUNISIA**

Brigadier General, Director of the National Security Framework Academy



**PALESTINE**

Brigadier, Director of Family and Juvenile Protection Directorate



**MOROCCO**

(uniformed and non-uniformed)  
Security Commander, Head of Traffic Division B & General Supervisor, Head of the IT Project Tracking Department

Inclusive policymaking and strategies bring long-term benefits, both in the public and the private sector. More diverse leadership teams have been shown to make higher quality, more fact-based decisions, and tend to be more innovative, developing products and solutions that reach a wider range of people. Inclusive decision-making processes build teams that outperform those which are homogenous and hierarchical. Organizations with a more diverse workforce are also more capable of adapting to change and thus more likely to lead transformation<sup>56</sup>. This makes equality and inclusion not just a moral imperative, but also a strategic one that promotes sustainable growth and builds agile and flexible organizations which are more capable of addressing challenges<sup>57</sup>.

The fact that there are few women officers in law enforcement has a ripple effect on their opportunities to progress into operational roles and to continue on to leadership positions. The lack of representation in decision-making can have far-reaching consequences, including on the ability of women police to influence the development of policies and strategies which address the needs and concerns of women, both within the organization and in the services provided for the communities they serve.

Given that men are disproportionately represented in the workforce, they also often hold the most senior positions, while women may not have the opportunity to progress to more senior roles such as head of a department, head of a security centre,

or director. When they do manage to progress through the ranks, it is often in administration, human resources, training and public relations, or as heads of the dedicated women-only teams or training centres. These general observations were also echoed by officers from the region *'women officers may be present in many departments but rarely lead any'*. Col. Fadlallah, Palestine.

Several agencies have deployed targeted initiatives in order to address the clear lack of progression through the ranks, and most importantly the lack of women officers in leadership positions. In Morocco, 2020 marked a turning point for women's career advancement opportunities, as changes to promotion regulations led to a significant increase in the promotion of women police officers. These changes in recruitment and promotion processes enabled more women to be recruited and to join the police force at senior, specialized levels and to reach leadership positions. Jordan's PSD Gender Strategy foresees the creation of mechanisms, such as capacity-building or leadership development programmes.



**"Before 2020, there were no women directors - it's really only recently, thanks to laws and efforts, that this has changed.**

— woman officer, Tunisia

”

The use of quotas or targets to promote women's participation in law enforcement has been successfully employed in several agencies. This can be seen in Tunisia, where there has been a significant increase in the number of women in leadership positions – head of a national security centre, head of a squad, head of a department or sub-department, director and general director - over the last five years. This increase is directly attributed to the adoption of the quota system.

Quotas have long been a topic of intense debate, with some arguing they are necessary to ensure

better representation and opportunities for women, while others see them as a form of reverse discrimination. The possible use of quotas or targets needs to be carefully managed, and its rationale communicated clearly. It is essential to emphasize that the use of quotas or targets

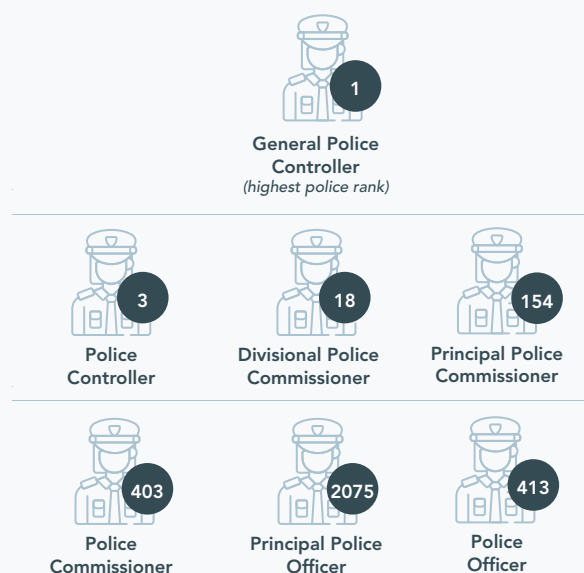
does not compromise recruitment standards, as this could undermine the credibility of both existing women officers and those who may have benefited from the quota system.

In all partner countries, women officers expressed their wish to set a certain threshold for the recruitment of women in promotion exercises and for participation in training, even more so when the training takes place abroad, to guarantee that women are considered. Officers felt that without such measures they are often overlooked for training opportunities or promotion exercises.

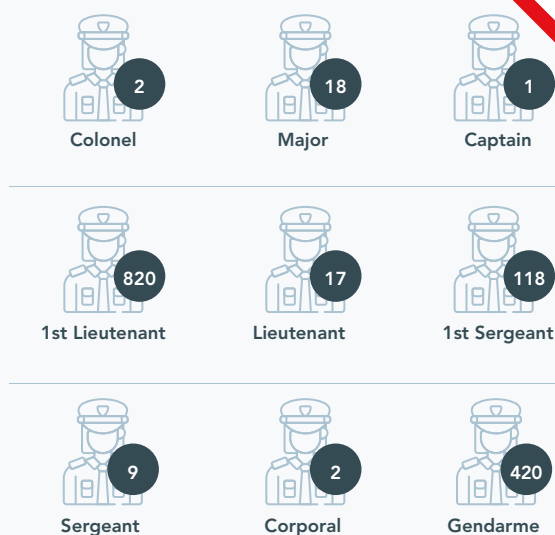


## Women in leadership positions in Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia

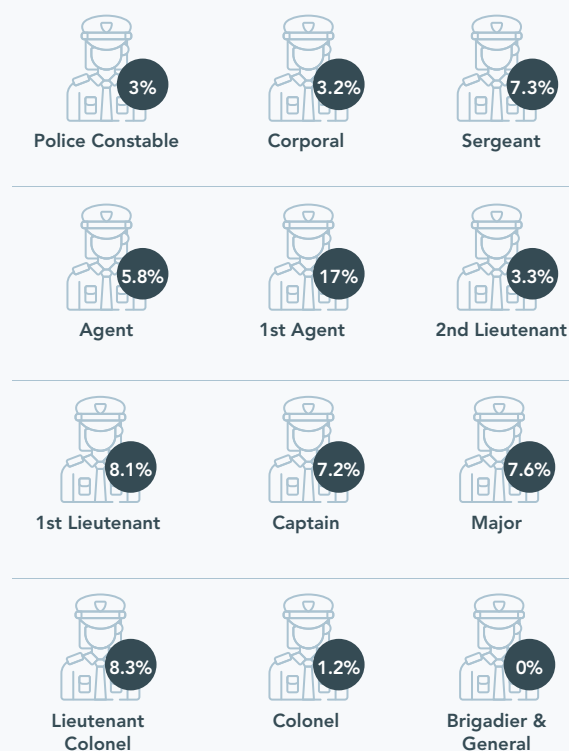
### BREAKDOWN OF HIGH-RANKING WOMEN OFFICERS IN ALGERIA<sup>58</sup>



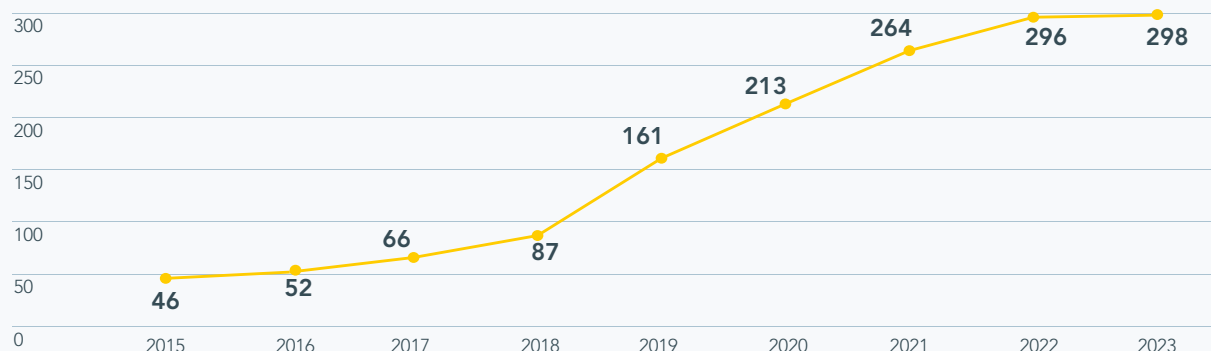
### LEBANON



### JORDAN<sup>59</sup>



## The evolution of Moroccan women officers in decision-making positions



## Distribution of the number of policewomen in 2023



## Building structured mechanisms to support women in policing

**"A good recommendation from one's director is what matters maybe the most in terms of career progression. In Tunisia we do not apply for a more senior role, we are recommended, we work by nomination, and this remains very subjective.**

— senior ranking woman officer, Tunisia.

”

and policies can help increase representation, informal factors such as professional networks have also been proven to play a crucial role in shaping career trajectories. Networks can act as a powerful catalyst for career advancement and leadership progression, providing access to invaluable resources, social capital, and opportunities. Professional networks play a key role in promotion practices, influencing who gets noticed,

One possible explanation for the lack of women in leadership is that women do not have good role models or networking opportunities, which may foster feelings of isolation and make it more difficult for them to advance in their careers<sup>60</sup>. Increasing the number of women police officers requires a multi-faceted approach. While deliberate strategies such as quotas, targets,

mentored, and ultimately promoted to leadership positions. By fostering mentorship, sponsorship, and collaborative dialogue, professional networks can facilitate the exchange of ideas, drive collective action, and unlock new opportunities for individuals, ultimately helping to bridge the gender gap and promote a more inclusive and equitable work environment<sup>61</sup>.

Professional networks for uniformed women have been used as avenues to facilitate experience sharing among women officers, increase communication, and provide a platform for senior women to mentor and encourage more junior women to engage in front-line security sector roles and to support their career progression. This mentorship and support are perceived as crucial to retaining women once they are hired and specifically to women's continued growth and success in the field<sup>62</sup>. Without strong role models and a supportive network, women may struggle to advance in their careers and may be more likely to leave the profession.

Though women may be tempted to compete with one another for the limited opportunities and positions, support and mentorship can help cultivate more space and opportunities<sup>63</sup>.



**Some of the most important skills women must have to assume leadership positions and succeed as law enforcement leaders are negotiation, persuasion, and communication, and most importantly creating a network for themselves."**

– woman officers attending the roundtable discussion on women in law enforcement facilitated by INTERPOL in Lyon in October 2024.





## HIGHLIGHT 6:

### A national network advancing women's roles in the Palestinian Civilian Police

As of today, Palestine is the only country among those covered by this research that has established a network for women officers, with the support of the United Nations and the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS). This network was set up in the form of an association with the explicit consent of the Director General of the Palestinian Police, and aims to be a full member of the International Association of Women in Police.

The network, comprising approximately 360 women officers, aims to achieve several key objectives, including sharing experiences with neighbouring countries and internationally, building capacity and providing training, empowering women to take on leadership roles and decision-making positions, and raising awareness among its members about the importance of equal rights. The network seeks to mobilize and unify its members around a single message, advancing women officers' rights and privileges. The network offers a physical platform where members can come together to discuss their specific challenges and exchange ideas in order to encourage collective problem-solving and joint

action towards common goals. The network is an initiative that aims to foster a sense of community and shared purpose among women officers.

The network's structure was established through a democratic process, where 25 women representatives from different departments created an "identity card" for the network, which then led to the election of a board of directors, president, treasurer, and other key positions. Additionally, consultative councils have been formed based on the various members' expertise, focusing on areas such as investigation, family, and child protection. Notably, the network does not charge membership fees, and a consultative status has been created for retired officers, allowing them to remain engaged and contribute their experience and knowledge.

Despite being on hold since October 7th, 2023, due to the war in Gaza and the security situation in Palestine, the network has previously organized various activities, such as leadership training for 20 women police officers in Ramallah and medical tests for women.



## Building Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Police Institutions through Training

Knowledge is power. Without the relevant knowledge and skills, officers will be ineffective, unproductive, and unable to accomplish tasks at maximum efficiency. Due to the high visibility of police officers and their regular interaction with the public, they are also held to high standards of behaviour and knowledge in the execution of their work enforcing laws and protecting and securing citizens. Continuous training is therefore essential for all law enforcement officers.

Research conducted in other policing contexts has linked access to technical and leadership training to career progression, rank attainment, and ultimately to having women in decision-making posts<sup>64</sup>. A lack of (access to) relevant training creates a “progression paradox,” where agencies may claim equal opportunity on paper but in reality women cannot compete for senior roles because they have not been cycled through the same accredited courses, tactical assignments, or mentorship pipelines as their male peers<sup>65</sup>. Therefore, ensuring that women

candidates for supervisory and command positions and strengthens institutional credibility.

Agencies in the Middle East and North Africa region tried to address two of the factors that hinder women’s participation in training, specifically the lack of appropriate facilities for women police and women’s reluctance to travel to centralized locations. Agencies have implemented various solutions to overcome these two challenges. Some have established dedicated training facilities for women officers, such as Jordan’s Princess Basma Women Police Training Institute, while others have expanded existing infrastructure, including women’s dorms and training centers, to accommodate women officers traveling from afar. Additionally, tailored approaches such as online training options, which have been introduced in Algeria, and roving training teams, implemented in Jordan, have also significantly increased women officers’ participation, and have proven effective in delivering training programmes closer to officers’ duty stations, thereby reducing the need for travel and increasing the number of women who participate in training initiatives.

To ensure equal access to training opportunities, many women officers support the implementation of quotas or targets for women’s participation in training programmes. As one officer from Tunisia suggested *“There must be a quota for women’s participation because women officers are not aware of the trainings taking place in many instances, but if INTERPOL asks for a minimum number of women, then the institution will ensure they*

**“The numbers speak for themselves: women officers realize that in their department men tend to be chosen for training more frequently than their female colleagues. It is indeed very common for a male officer to accumulate 10 training programmes over the course of his career, whereas his female counterpart averages around 1-2 training programmes.**

— woman officer attending the roundtable discussion on women in law enforcement facilitated by INTERPOL in Lyon, October 2024.

”

officers receive specialized investigative and operational training – including on organized crime, cyber-enabled crime, and complex investigations – as well as structured leadership development and mentorship throughout the promotion process, directly increases the pool of qualified women

*participate in the training.”* By implementing such measures, international organizations can help level the playing field and ensure that women officers have equal access to the training and development opportunities they need to succeed.



## HIGHLIGHT 7:

# The Tunisian National Police Academy's efforts in terms of capacity building and training

In 2023, a comprehensive 13-month survey was conducted to investigate why so few women were participating in training programmes within the National Security, National Guard, and Civil Protection sectors. The survey covered approximately 28% of women in these sectors, across various ranks and responsibilities. The analysis identified three main reasons for the low participation rate:

- **Personal reasons:** Family and household responsibilities, potential additional expenses, lack of personal interest, and issues related to the participants' health status.
- **Professional reasons:** Limited awareness of training opportunities, irrelevance of training to their specialty, conflicting professional commitments, and gender-based discrimination, including exclusion from certain specializations deemed to be male-dominated.
- **Organizational reasons:** Inaccessible training locations and logistical obstacles, such as limited accommodations for women and inadequate facilities.

### The proposals and recommendations offered included:

- **Increasing** mobile training sessions and establishing online platforms to improve accessibility.
- **Developing** an annual action plan to boost women's participation in training.
- **Implementing** quotas for nominating women for training programmes, eliminating biases and stereotypes.
- **Creating** an action plan to increase the number of women participating in specific training areas, with numerical targets.
- **Encouraging** the appointment of women to decision-making positions in order to enhance their leadership skills and motivate their peers to pursue self-development and professional opportunities.
- **Gradually expanding** training programmes to cover remote areas.



The expected outcome is a gradual increase in the number of women participating in training courses, with targets set at 20% in 2024 and 25% in 2025. The survey is an excellent practice to be integrated by training departments seeking to understand and address the underlying causes of low participation by women in training programmes.

However, providing training and capacity building opportunities for women police is only half of the equation. Gender-responsive training for law enforcement, including survivor-centered interviewing, evidence handling in cases of violence against women and children, and understanding how gender norms shape both offending and victimization is repeatedly linked to better case handling, higher reporting rates, and greater community trust<sup>66</sup>. Evaluations from multiple regions indicate that when officers receive gender-sensitive training, they demonstrate greater empathy toward survivors, apply procedures more consistently, and show stronger commitment to intervening in domestic violence cases.

It is equally important to provide training on gender equality and human rights for all personnel to foster an organizational culture that promotes equality and respect within law enforcement agencies. This type of training is essential to ensure that all officers are equipped to serve and protect their communities in a fair and effective manner.

Gender training can contribute to fostering inclusive workplaces by addressing internal power dynamics, biases, and discriminatory attitudes. If it is embedded in larger, ongoing processes of institutional transformation, such training can be a powerful tool for driving individual and collective change towards gender equality and a more equitable and just work environment<sup>67</sup>. It is recommended that these training programmes should be mandatory and recurrent, rather than ad-hoc, optional, or dependent on international partners, in order to standardize professional policing practice, fulfil national and international obligations on human rights and gender equality, and improve institutional legitimacy with the public.

Several police training academies and institutes in the seven countries are offering some gender and / or human rights training courses, some with support from international partners. For example, the Training Directorate of the PSD provides courses on human rights and women's rights as part of their professional and leadership training programmes across all ranks. Lebanon's Training Academy has a Human Rights unit which is responsible for providing training. Across the board, all countries have made significant strides in recent years, specifically in terms of developing and providing training on sexual and gender-based violence and dealing with victims of these crimes.





# Moving forward

This research aimed to answer a central question: *What progress has been made in recent decades to enhance women's participation in law enforcement?* The regional overview demonstrates steady progress on multiple fronts, particularly over the past ten years. Countries across the MENA region have embarked on a gradual transformation driven by legal, policy, and institutional changes. Constitutions and national laws have been amended, and new gender equality and women, peace, and security policy frameworks have been adopted.

Countries have also embarked on a range of promising institutional practices and initiatives to support the recruitment and deployment of women and their progression into leadership positions. Law enforcement institutions in several countries have introduced gender strategies, established gender offices, launched dedicated training and mentoring programmes, and set numerical targets or quotas for the recruitment or promotion of policewomen. These efforts have led to an increase in the numbers of women,



more deployments across a wider range of duties, and a steady rise in the number of women taking on leadership roles. While representation remains below 10% and numerous barriers persist, these developments mark a shift towards more inclusive law enforcement institutions that recognize women's contributions to operational effectiveness and their key role in tackling the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As governments and law enforcement agencies continue to recognize the importance of increasing the number of women participating in policing, international partners, such as the European Union and INTERPOL, have a key role to play in supporting their efforts. Specifically, in order to sustain and build on the progress achieved until now, practical measures must be considered, including:

- **Continuing to align national and institutional legislation and policy frameworks with international commitments** such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325.
- **Ensuring progress on the implementation of gender strategies and action plans** by translating legal and policy frameworks into clear implementation processes and regular monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. Strategies must not only be developed but also resourced, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. Institutional accountability mechanisms are essential to closing the gap between policy and practice and maintaining progress over time. Regular reporting mechanisms such as the proposed 'Women in PSD' initiative in Jordan can be an effective mechanism for law enforcement agencies to communicate achievements, track progress, and demonstrate accountability.
- **Continuing to strengthen efforts to recruit women officers** by investing in targeted recruitment campaigns or adapting recruitment criteria to raise the overall number of women police officers.
- **Providing women officers with specialized technical training** and tailored

technical assistance, which helps to close remaining knowledge and skills gaps. To this end, introducing participation targets or temporary quotas for women in training programmes can be an effective special measure for ensuring equal access to professional development and career advancement opportunities.

- **Continuing to strengthen modular style training**, online training opportunities, and roving training teams to provide more opportunities for women police to attend.
- **Continuing to increase the range of deployments for women officers to include specialized** and technical areas such as cybercrime, organized crime, forensics, and tactical units, as well as to postings that carry organizational prestige and ensure the individual is promotion-ready, in order to break the stereotype that women "belong" exclusively in community outreach or victim support.
- **Ensuring women are represented on promotion panels** and creating talent pipelines and leadership programmes to continue to improve the representation of women police in leadership positions.
- **Expanding training and capacity-building to foster sustainable institutional transformation.** Regular and practical capacity-building programmes for law enforcement officers, emphasizing the way gender considerations enhance operational effectiveness, have the potential to reshape attitudes and behaviour, and contribute to lasting institutional change. For this potential to be realized, training should be embedded within broader organizational processes such as strategic planning, recruitment and promotion systems, performance evaluation, and policy development, and should involve both men and women across all roles and ranks.
- **Building a workforce and an institution that works for men and women** and that delivers the best service for citizens. A transformative shift in institutional culture is needed if women are to be effectively

recruited, retained, and deployed in traditionally male-dominated institutions. This involves creating an inclusive environment where all personnel are valued and empowered to contribute significantly. The ultimate responsibility lies with leadership in terms of defining objectives, processes, competencies, infrastructure, and milestones that embed gender considerations into recruitment, training, deployment, supervision, and promotion and set the tone of the organizational culture.

- Organizational change takes root when **senior leaders recognize the strategic value of gender mainstreaming and champion women's participation** in law enforcement. Visible commitment, mentorship, and equitable practices create the pathways and culture needed for women to advance into senior and decision-making roles.

- **Keeping this topic high on the agenda to ensure progress continues apace.**

Publications such as this one, as well as international, regional, and national initiatives which document progress and remaining challenges, play a critical role in maintaining international focus and action on this agenda.

As we look to the future, international organizations and bilateral partners can and should continue to play a catalytic role in advancing women's participation in law enforcement. Their support through targeted financing, technical assistance, and sustained political commitment remains essential to ensuring that this agenda remains a deliverable priority and that the progress achieved in recent years translates into lasting institutional change.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Editorial Board Members



**ALGERIA — Dr. Yasmina Khouas**

Dr. Yasmina Khouas is the Head of the Central Bureau for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons in the Judicial Police Directorate. She is also a member of the committee responsible for elaborating the National Plan of Action for Children, under the National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Children. Dr Khouas holds a PhD in social psychology.



**JORDAN — Brigadier Dr. Dalal “Muhammad Ghazi” Sawalha**

Brigadier Dalal is the Commander of the Women’s Police at the Public Security Directorate. Previously, she has held several key positions, including Deputy Commander of the Women’s Police, Director of the Princess Basma Women Police Training Institute, and Director of the Women’s Correction and Rehabilitation Center in Jordan. Her priorities include empowering and integrating women in all areas of the PSD’s work, as well as developing their capabilities.



**LEBANON — Col. Diala El Mohtar**

In 2001, Col. Diala El Mohtar became the first woman in Lebanon to join the Internal Security Forces as a specialized officer. Today, she serves as Head of the Studies Branch in the Information Technology Division and Head of the Internal Security Forces Gender Audit Team. She represents the Internal Security Forces on the National Observatory for Gender Equality Committee and on the Committee for the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.



#### **MOROCCO — Division Commissioner Dr Amal Berkia**

Division Police Commissioner Dr. Amal Berkia is the director of the Police Magazine and a member of the Central Communication Unit at the General Directorate of National Security, the first time this position has been held by a woman police officer since 1961. She joined the General Directorate of National Security in 2007 and initially led the Nuclear, Radiological, Chemical, and Biological (NRCB) Risk Management Unit within the Scientific and Technical Police Department of the Judicial Police Directorate. She later became the head of the Quality and Risk Management Department within the same directorate. Dr Berkia holds a PhD in microbiology.



#### **PALESTINE — Brigadier Dr. Khawla Fadlallah**

Brigadier Khawla Fadlallah is Director of Family and Juvenile Protection Directorate, a part-time university lecturer, and is actively engaged in the Palestinian women officers' network. Brigadier Fadlallah holds a doctorate in educational administration.



#### **TUNISIA — Police Commissioner General Raoudha Bayoudh**

Police Commissioner General Raoudha Bayoudh served as Director of the Police School in Bizerte (Tunisia), and is currently Director of Studies and Competency Development at the General Directorate of Training for National Security. As a trainer, speaker, and moderator, she leads several regional training sessions on combatting violence against women and children, combating the trafficking of persons, cybercrime, and gender mainstreaming. She was awarded the Presidential Prize for Children's Rights in 2015 and the Honour Award for International Women's Day in 2019. She also holds a professorship degree in Private Law, as well as a master's degree in Legislative Studies.



# Resources

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|  | RESOURCES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |
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|  | <p>United Nations. (2022). <i>Resolution 11/2: Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols</i>. Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Retrieved <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>World Bank. (2024). <i>Women, Business and the Law 2024</i>. World Bank Group.</p> <p>World Economic Forum. (2024). <i>Global Gender Gap Report 2024</i>. Retrieved <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>World Economic Forum. (2024). <i>Shaping an inclusive economy by scaling DEI initiatives</i>. Retrieved December 3, 2024. Retrieved <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>World Economic Forum. (2023). <i>3 paradigm shifts in corporate sustainability to new era of ESG</i>. Retrieved December 3, 2024. Retrieved <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>United Nations. (2017). <i>Resolution 26/3: Mainstreaming gender and human rights in organized crime policies</i>. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Retrieved <a href="#">here</a>.</p> |  |

# Endnotes

- 1 Charman, S. (2024). *Not just a numbers game: Assessing the journey of women in policing from representation to inclusion*. *The Political Quarterly*, 95(3), 123-140.
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- 4 Art. 15(4) refers to equal rights of movement and choice of residence. Jordan withdrew its initial reservation to Article 15(4) in 2009.
- 5 On July 15, 2009, the government reported that it was lifting its reservation to Article 9(2) regarding transferring nationality to children.
- 6 These reservations were made primarily due to concerns regarding possible conflict with Islamic Sharia law.
- 7 Art. 9(2) refers to the equal right to nationality.
- 8 Art. 16(1) covers the right of women to equality in all matters pertaining to marriage and family relations. Paragraph (c) covers the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution.
- 9 Paragraph (d) covers the same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount.
- 10 Paragraph (g) covers the same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession, and an occupation.
- 11 Initiated and headed by HRH Princess Basma, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) is a semi-governmental organization established by the Council of Ministers Decision No. 21/11/3382 in 1992.
- 12 Art. 16 refers to family relations.
- 13 Art. 29(1) on the referral of disputes and arbitrations on the interpretation of the Convention to the International Court of Justice.
- 14 The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) was established by Decree No. 1815 and issued on August 2, 1998, following Lebanon's participation in the international conference in Beijing in September 1995. This is pursuant to Law No. 1998/720, which entrusted it with consultative tasks with the government and liaison and coordination tasks with administrations and institutions, civil society organizations, and international bodies and organizations.

## ENDNOTES

- 15 Declaration to Article 2, stating that the government of the Kingdom of Morocco is ready to apply the provisions of the Article as long as these do not conflict with Islamic law.
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- 37 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). (2023). *Gender mainstreaming strategy and implementation plan for the Public Security Directorate in Jordan (2021–2024)*. Retrieved [here](#).
- 38 SWOT is an analytical model used to understand the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of an organization. It helps assess and understand the internal and external forces that may create opportunities or risks for an organization.
- 39 The audit findings are not available in the public domain.
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- 41 The strategy is available at: [Gender Mainstreaming Strategy](#).
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- 46 All information regarding numbers and percentages presented in this regional overview has been communicated by members of the Editorial Board. Most of the information, except if otherwise indicated, is not available from open sources. Responsibility for the accuracy of the information rests with national agencies and cannot be independently verified.
- 47 Due to the differences in the way law enforcement agencies are structured, it is impossible to compare data across countries and to provide a unified, comprehensive view of the number of officers by rank. Lower ranks usually include entry-level ranks for police officers responsible for patrolling and basic law enforcement duties such as Peacekeeper, Police and Chief Brigadier (Morocco), Police Agent to First Sergeant (Tunisia), and Constable to First Sergeant (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine). Middle and higher ranks include mid-level supervisory ranks such as Police Officer to Principal Police Commander (Morocco) and Second Lieutenant to Captain (Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine). Senior ranks would include Police Commander and Principal Police Commander (Morocco) and Major to Colonel (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon). The most senior ranks include Police Commissioner and above (Morocco), or Brigadier General and above (Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon).
- 48 After a long pause in recruitment, in 2024 and 2025 additional recruitment processes were set up. These figures do not account for the new batch of recruits that graduated in 2025 and subsequently.

## ENDNOTES

- 49 Some of the statistics and graphs presented are available in the General Direction of National Security, Revue de Police (No. 47). Published in April 2023. All figures for Morocco reflect information as of 2023.
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